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# HINTS

ON THE

## PORTABLE EVIDENCE

OF

### Christianity.

BY

JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY.

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"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."—2 TIM. iii. 16.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

1 JOHN v. 10.

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## P R E F A C E.

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IN the course of a social evening's conversation, I heard that eminent Christian philosopher, Dr. Chalmers, make some instructive remarks to the following effect:

“The historical evidences of Christianity are abundantly sufficient to satisfy the scrutiny of the learned, and they are within the reach of all well educated persons. But the internal evidences of the truth have a still wider influence, for they are open and intelligible to every sincere enquirer. Every man who reads the Bible with attention, and observes the value and excellence of the book—every man who compares what it says of mankind with his own experience, and marks the fitness of its mighty scheme of doctrine to his own spiritual need as a sinner in the sight of God—is furnished with practical proof of the divine origin of our religion. I love this evidence; I call it the *portable* evidence of Christianity.”

My object, in this little volume, is to develop these views; and I trust no apology is required for my adopting the term by which Dr. Chalmers so happily distinguished his favorite kind of evidence. The Bible is a portable book, and the Christian whether at home or on a journey, ought always to keep it within his reach, and make use of it as his daily companion. Again—whatsoever be our place or circumstances, we all carry about with us a knowledge of our own experience.

The subject naturally divides itself into two parts. In the first place, the Bible, considered alone, affords in the purity, dignity, harmony, and practical importance, of its contents, sufficient evidences of its own divine origin. And secondly, the accordance of the truths revealed in Scripture, with what we know in ourselves, and observe in the world around us, and more especially the adaptation of the gospel of Christ to the condition of fallen man, supplies us with a further conclusive proof, that the Creator and moral Governor of the Universe, is the Author of the Bible.

While multitudes, in the present day, even among the working classes of society, are *obtaining* some acquaintance with useful science,

it is most desirable that as far as possible, they should be instructed also in the evidences of Christianity. Even those of a critical and historical nature, might without much difficulty be made far more familiar to persons of little education, than they are at present; and the more they are examined, the more clearly will it be discovered that Christianity in its original and purely scriptural form, rests upon a basis which can never be shaken.

In the mean time I trust it will not be useless to invite the attention of the Public to some of those proofs of the truth of our holy religion, which lie immediately before us, and which, where the Bible is freely circulated, are within the reach of every serious and reflecting mind.

I cannot however satisfactorily enter upon my argument, without premising one general remark. Although in a day so marked as the present by unsettled and floating opinions, it is peculiarly desirable that Christians should be able to give a reason—and even many reasons—for the hope which is in them, it must not be inferred from hence, that the religion of Jesus stands in need of apology or defence. While its advocates are at all times ready to state the reasons of their unalterable convic-

tions, they by no means intend to give countenance to the notion that the truth of Christianity is debatable ground.

As the existence and moral government of the Deity are truths which bear with a native and resistless force on every candid mind, and need no arguments to prove them, so the unparalleled goodness of Christianity at once impresses us with its *truth*. I conceive it to be a first principle in morals, wrought by the hand of God into our very nature, and requiring no other evidence of its reality, that *what is good, is true*.

The real source of the proneness of man to reject revealed religion, is to be found in those propensities of the heart which are opposed to all goodness. Corrupt and rebellious as we are, we shrink from the piercing rays of the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot bear to have our inclinations thwarted, our passions subdued, our independence led captive, and our pride levelled with the dust. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John iii, 19.

## HINTS, &c.

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### PART I.

#### THE BIBLE CONSIDERED ALONE.

IN endeavouring to unfold “the portable evidence of Christianity,” it will be well for us in the first instance, to consider the Bible as the single object of our attention, and to take a brief view of its native, inherent, claim to divine authority. Were that sacred volume more of a daily companion and intimate friend to us—did the words which it contains dwell in our hearts—did we “bind” them “for a sign” upon our hands, and as “frontlets” between our eyes—our lingering doubts respecting Christianity and its doctrines, would soon fade away. Not a trace of them would be left to mar our peace or to interrupt our communion with God.

It ought however to be premised, that if we bring to the investigation of Scripture a haughty and self-sufficient spirit, we shall be little likely to form a just estimate of its contents. It is a marked and peculiar feature of the Christian system,—and one which

## 2 THE BIBLE CONSIDERED ALONE.

strongly indicates the wisdom of its Contriver—that God hides the secrets of his love from “the wise and prudent” (that is from those who account themselves such) and reveals them unto “babes.”<sup>1</sup> “The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way.”<sup>2</sup> Let the humble man study the Scriptures in the remembrance of his own ignorance. Let him, as a matter of course, expect difficulties—knots which he cannot untie—just as every sound philosopher expects them in his investigation of nature. Let him remember that the whole scheme of Christianity professes to be ordained of God, and to be revealed to man, for *practical purposes*. Let him, in his perusal of the book, honestly endeavour to apply its contents to these its professed ends. Above all, under a sense of his weakness and liability to error, let him fervently pray God to correct and enlighten his understanding and to assist him in his search after truth. What will be the consequence?

I believe it will inevitably be this—that the more he becomes acquainted with the Scriptures, the clearer will be his view of their beauty, their harmony, and their strength; and the more deeply will he therefore be impressed with the belief that they are the oracles of God.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxv, 9.



## SECTION I.

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF SCRIPTURE, AND ON THE  
ACCORDANCE OF ITS PARTS.

THERE are no writings in the world, which contain history so important, poetry so sublime, delineation of character so instructive, devotional compositions so tender, and maxims so wise and useful, as the Bible. But the moral and spiritual *force* of the sacred volume is that which chiefly serves to fasten its contents on the mind of every honest enquirer, whether more or less educated, and to produce a settled conviction of its divine origin.

No man can be in the habit of reading the Scriptures with attention, and in a humble devotional spirit, without finding himself the better for the book. It will be the means of exalting his views of the Supreme Being; of awakening his love for the Redeemer; of animating his desires after holiness; and of imbuing him with charity towards his fellow men. Thus on the general principle alluded to in our preface, that *what is good is true*, his mind will gradually be given up to an unfeigned belief of its contents.

It is especially worthy of remark, that many parts of Scripture are so full of instruction—the mine is so deep and so richly stored—that the treasure is never exhausted. A man may return to the same passage a thousand times, yet never with the feeling of

satiety; seldom, perhaps, without deriving from it some fresh lesson, important to the religious life. This may be regarded as one of the sure marks of inspiration.

Another mark of it is the concentration of much and varied instruction within a very small compass. A single verse, or part of a verse, penned by a prophet or an apostle—singular and original in its character—will often furnish materials for useful and edifying thought to an almost unlimited extent. What a vast field for profitable reflection, for example, may be found in the declaration of David, that “*the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory;*”<sup>1</sup> and again, that “*He will beautify the meek with salvation;*”<sup>2</sup> or in the words of Wisdom, “*All they that hate me, love death;*”<sup>3</sup> or in the doctrine of Paul, “*To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace;*”<sup>4</sup> or in the address of Peter, “*Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;*”<sup>5</sup> or in the saying of John, “*God is love.*”<sup>6</sup> A surprising number and variety of important ideas are suggested to the mind by each of these passages, and by a multitude of others of a like character. It is true that similar modes of expression are now often used, by unin-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiv, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. viii, 36.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. i, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxlix, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii, 6.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John iv, 16.

spired writers ; but this circumstance only strengthens our argument, because the Bible is the original fountain, from which they are derived. It is a text book for moral and religious teaching, which knows no rival, and to the use and application of which there appears to be no limit.

We cannot calculate the amount of good which has been effected since the Christian era, by the ministry of the gospel and by the works of religious authors. Yet no preachers of the gospel, no writers on religion, have ever added any improvement to Christianity as it was first revealed. Whatsoever, in the preaching or writings of modern Christians, has any tendency to convert, purify, and save the souls of men, never fails to be found in its original form, in the Bible. How can we account for this unquestionable fact, except by the inspiration of the sacred writers ?

The divine origin of Scripture becomes yet more evident, when we reflect upon its larger masses. The Psalms of David, for example, were composed a thousand years before the Christian era ; yet even now, after the lapse of so many ages, they are daily food to multitudes, and are found applicable to Christian experience, the deepest and the most various. Does not this fact afford a palpable proof that they were given by inspiration ?

When we meditate on the simplicity, harmony, and edifying tendency, of the four

Gospels, and on the information which they contain respecting the life, character, doctrine, death, and resurrection of Christ, our minds are filled with light; and we cannot refuse to allow that these unrivalled memorials were given to us of God.

I conceive that no man can truly imbibe the meaning of Paul, Peter, and John, in the doctrinal parts of their epistles, without arriving at a strong conviction, that doctrines so distinct and various, yet so exactly balanced; so novel and extraordinary, yet so satisfactory to the judgment, and so influential on the heart, must have flowed from the source of all knowledge and wisdom. Nor would any candid mind be likely to form a different opinion respecting the rich and full morality, which is to be found in the preceptive parts of those epistles, and in that most practical of treatises, the epistle of James.

As a last example we may mention the Revelation; for although that remarkable book abounds in difficulties, a fair consideration of its contents will convince us, that nothing but the pen of inspiration could have drawn such a picture of the then future destinies of the church, of the fearful struggle which she must still maintain against the powers of darkness, and of her complete victory and endless glory.

Thus, it appears, that both the smaller and larger divisions of the Bible bear evident marks of that divine wisdom from which they originated; but our convictions on the sub-

ject cannot fail to be greatly strengthened when we observe the harmony of sentiment and doctrine which pervades the mighty whole. The Bible consists of numerous distinct works,—historical, prophetic, and didactic,—composed at a variety of dates, by very many individuals independent of each other, who differed in character, circumstance, and condition; and yet these writings all point in one direction, and combine in developing *one system of truth*. It seems impossible to account for this general result, except by the fact, that their authors all wrote under the influence of the same Spirit :

“ Whence these agreeing truths? or how or why  
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?”

The harmony of Scripture is the more remarkable, because this system of truth was unfolded by degrees. While the successive revelations recorded in Scripture admirably coincide, they manifest a gradual progress towards perfect light. The moral principles which were revealed to our first parents, and of which there are many traces in the history of the patriarchs, were confirmed and reduced to a code, in the days of Moses; and the law of expiation by sacrifice, of which from the very date of the fall, mankind had possessed some clear notions, was, at the same period, defined and detailed. Yet, the light bestowed on Moses and his followers, with regard to morals, was preparatory to a still more extensive exhibition of them under the gospel;

and the types and shadows with which the Jewish ritual abounded, were fulfilled in the Saviour of men made manifest in the flesh.

This fact suggests the remark, that besides the general harmony of Scripture there are distinct parts of the Bible, composed at long intervals of time, which *answer* to each other, just as the image of a man in a mirror, answers to the living form.

Who can deliberately compare the types of the law with their great antitype as revealed in the gospel, and take a fair view in succession, of the shadow and the substance, of the figure and the reality, without perceiving in the agreement of the one with the other, and in the keeping of the whole picture, the unquestionable evidence of truth?

Take for example the lamb of the passover, a male without spot or blemish, not a bone of which was to be broken; and call to mind that the sprinkling of its blood on the doorposts of the Israelite, was the appointed means of ensuring his safety from the power of the destroyer. What a lively figure of the Lamb of God, whose blood sprinkled on the heart, arrests the hand of justice and protects from the penalty of sin! Take again the serpent of brass which Moses lifted up on a pole, that the Israelites mortally diseased from the bite of the fiery serpents, might look upon it in faith, and live.<sup>6</sup> Who does not perceive in this circumstance an expressive shadow of Christ lifted up on the cross, to whom the

<sup>6</sup> Num. xxi, 9.

believer, wounded by Satan, poisoned with sin, directs the eye of his soul, and is healed, and lives for ever?<sup>7</sup>

Peculiarly pertinent as shadows of the great doctrines of the Gospel were the ceremonies practised under the Mosaic law, on the day of atonement. Previously to the services of the day, the high priest puts off his gorgeous vestments and clothes himself in humble yet holy linen garments,—offers up a bullock for his own sins or errors, and a goat for those of the people,—enters once for all during the year, into the holy of holies, where were the Cherubim and the glory of God's presence,—confesses the sins of the Israelites over the head of a second goat, which is suffered to escape with his figurative burthen into an uninhabited wilderness—and finally resumes his splendid apparel and the usual condition of his office. In the mean time the bodies of the slain victims are burnt *without the camp*.<sup>8</sup>

So the Son of God, the high priest of the Christian's profession, divests himself of his pristine majesty—assumes his pure yet lowly human nature—suffers “without the gate”—offers up one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin,—carries away into oblivion the transgressions of his people—enters in “once for all” into the holiest place where the angels dwell in glory—there appears in the presence of God, for us,—and having made peace by the blood of his cross, is exalted at the right hand of

<sup>7</sup> John iii, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Lev. xvi.

the Father in all his original honour and dignity. There is still another point of coincidence which is worthy of notice. On that day of figurative atonement, the Israelites were commanded by a "statute for ever" to *afflict their souls*. And by a decree, alike perpetual, *repentance* is the indispensable accompaniment of reconciliation with God, through faith in the blood of Jesus.

It cannot be believed that these and many similar resemblances between the law and the gospel are the result of chance. Still less can we imagine, either that the Jews practised these ceremonies and ascribed them to their forefathers in order to recommend the gospel, or that the Apostles invented the gospel as a key to the ritual of the law. Significant as that ritual is seen to be under the light of the Christian revelation, there is nothing in it which could have led to the discovery, much less to the invention, of those mysterious and elevated doctrines, the incarnation and atonement of Christ. The plain fact is, that these ancient rites were "shadows of good things to come." The shadow and its substance were each made known in its season, and the correspondence between the two, affords an incontrovertible evidence that God was the Author of them both.

The general correctness of the history of an ancient people is confirmed by a vast of collateral proofs, supplied by the



chronicles of other nations; nor will it be doubted by the reflecting reader of Scripture, who marks the natural and circumstantial character of the whole narration and the accordance of its several parts. Taking it for granted then, that this history is what it professes to be, *a narrative of facts*, we may observe one feature in it, which distinguishes it from every other history in the world, and plainly denotes its divine origin. In many of its particulars it is capable of a typical or spiritual application, and through this medium, is fraught with instruction of the most important and enduring nature. This remark applies with peculiar force to the lives and characters of certain individuals.

In Melchizedek, the "king of righteousness" and "of peace," and priest of the Most High, to whom Abraham gave tithes of all his spoil; in the virtuous Joseph who was persecuted and sold, and who, through great affliction arrived at greater glory, so that both his friends and his enemies bent the knee before him; in Moses, the meekest of men, the law-giver and leader of Israel, the mediator between God and his people; in Joshua, who drove out their enemies from before them, and introduced them to the quiet possession of the land of promise; in David, the man after God's "own heart," that deep yet patient sufferer, that exalted king, that unconquered captain of the armies of Israel; in Solomon, the "king's son," whose peaceable government extended on every side, and whose wis-

dom pervaded the thousand secrets both of grace and nature—the student of Scripture will not fail to trace the types of that Saviour, in whom all these characteristics were afterwards so admirably combined, and perfected. Whatsoever things are good and glorious in the history and character of these real yet typical persons, find a common focus in Christ their antitype.

Again, let such a student reflect on the deliverance of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt, and from the tyranny of Pharaoh; on their long continued wanderings in the wilderness; on the manna from the skies and the water from the rock, by which they were sustained and refreshed; on the fiery cloud which guided them on their journey; on the miraculous passage of the nation over Jordan; and on their final settlement in the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey. What Christian does not derive from this narrative a delightful kind of instruction, while he is reminded by it, of the deliverance of Christ's followers—the whole nation of believers—from the tyranny of Satan and from the corruptions of the world; of their pilgrimage on the earth; of the spiritual bread which they eat; of the spiritual water which they drink; of the rock which accompanies them; of the light which guides them; of the death through which they must pass; and of the glorious and delightful rest—the heaven of abundant blessedness—into which they shall finally enter?

## PROPHECY COMPARED WITH HISTORY. 13

Historical facts, thus filled with an internal weight of instruction, and pointing to the vast realities of the spiritual world, must have arisen in the peculiar providence of God; and the religion with which they are connected, must be *His* religion. The accordances of revelation are like those of nature—numerous, unconcerted by man, peculiar, precise. Both bespeak as their only true origin, the wisdom and goodness of God.

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### SECTION II.

#### ON PROPHECY COMPARED WITH HISTORY.

THE religion of the Bible is attested by nothing more clearly than by prophecy compared with its fulfilment. Since the whole course of events arises out of the counsels of God, and since those counsels are secret and unfathomable, we may rest assured that an actual knowledge of the future, is an attribute which belongs to Him *alone*. Prophecies, therefore, which relate to circumstances so distant, peculiar, or complex, as to lie beyond the reach of conjecture, and which nevertheless are exactly fulfilled, can be traced by any reasonable mind, only to the Spirit of our Heavenly Father to whom all things are known, whether past, present, or future. Such prophecies are numerous in the Bible.

In order to take a full view of this branch of evidence, we must be well acquainted with

history, and with the present condition of various places and nations. The student of prophecy, for example, will of course be led to compare the predictions of the Lord Jesus respecting the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, with the relation which the *historian Josephus* has given of these events; and he will observe that complete agreement between the two, which clearly establishes the divine origin of the prophecy. Evidence equally strong, but still more extensive, arises from a comparison of the descriptions given by modern travellers of Babylon, Tyre, Arabia, Judæa, and many other cities and countries, with the prophecies respecting them contained in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Again, in the scattered condition of the Jews themselves, and in the contempt and persecution to which they have been so long exposed, persons even of very limited information, may find a *standing proof* that Moses and other holy men of old, who foretold these things, “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

But there are parts of the evidence derived from prophecy which, independently of any extraneous source of information, stand complete in the Bible itself. Thus the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be like the stars of heaven for multitude, and should inherit the land of Canaan, was ac-

<sup>1</sup> The particulars of this comparison are admirably unfolded by Alexander Keith, in his little work, entitled “Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion derived from the literal Fulfilment of Prophecy.” 1 vol. 12mo.

complished in the course of centuries, and the Bible contains a full account of the fact. To substantiate this proof, nothing is required but a comparison of parts of Genesis with the book of Joshua.

When Joshua had destroyed Jericho, he said, "Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."<sup>2</sup> This prophecy was delivered about 1450 years before Christ; and the first book of Kings contains an account of its exact fulfilment more than 500 years afterwards. The reign under which the circumstance took place, and the names of all the parties concerned, are there faithfully recorded.<sup>3</sup>

When King Jeroboam was sacrificing to his idols in Bethel (B. C. 975), a man of God came and "cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee."<sup>4</sup> That this prophecy was actually delivered accord-

<sup>2</sup> Joshua vi, 26.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xvi, 34.—"In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings xiii, 2.

ing to this narration, we have no reason whatever to doubt. Of its fulfilment, about 350 years afterwards the subsequent history of the Jews contains a clear account. There we read that Josiah was born of the seed of David according to the prophecy, and that he destroyed Jeroboam's altar at Bethel; "and as Josiah turned himself he spied the sepulchres that were in the mount, and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words."<sup>5</sup>

Jeremiah's predictions of the invasion of Judæa and the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon during seventy years, and of their peaceful return to their own land, were utterly disregarded by his hearers as improbable and absurd. Yet they were all accomplished in the course of a century, and subsequent historians or prophets who probably had no connexion with

<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings xxiii, 16.—There is a point in this example, which affords a striking evidence of its authenticity. The prophecy states that the priests were to be offered on the altar, and men's bones burnt thereon. The history mentions *only* the burning of the bones of the priests on the altar. The history unfolds the true meaning of the prediction, which was that the priests should be offered on the altar *by the burning of their skeletons upon it*. Yet this *apparent difference* would surely have been avoided by a forger, had such an one either invented the history as a key to the prophecy, or composed the prophecy after the event had happened.

Jeremiah, give a clear account of the events by which they were fulfilled.<sup>6</sup>

Cyrus, king of Persia, the conqueror of Babylon and the deliverer of the Jews, was prophesied of by name nearly two centuries before his birth. In the counsels of God he was pre-ordained to be the Lord's shepherd, to perform all his pleasure—"even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."<sup>7</sup> Such were the words of the prophecy delivered by Isaiah; and who can wish for a more satisfactory account of their accomplishment than we find in the book of Ezra?

The genuineness of the books of the Old Testament and the general truth of its history being allowed (an allowance which no sound critic will refuse to make), we have only to compare one part of that volume with another, in order to satisfy ourselves of the lucid character of these and many other prophecies, and of the exactness with which they have been fulfilled.

What could be more precise than the language in which our Lord foretold his own sufferings, death, and resurrection, the unfaithfulness of the Apostle Peter, and the sending of the Holy Ghost the Comforter? And who can deny that the simple and explicit narrative of these events, contained in

<sup>6</sup> Compare Jer. i, 14, 15; vi, 1; xxxiv, 2; xxv, 8—11; xxx, 10; xxxiii, 7; with 2 Kings xxv.; 2 Chron. xxxvi.; Ezra i.; Dan. ix, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah xlv, 28; comp. xlv, 1—4.

the New Testament itself, affords a satisfactory proof that Jesus was a true prophet?

These observations, however, apply with peculiar force to that wondrous line of prophecy which runs through the Old Testament, and which distinctly relates to the Messiah himself—that seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head.<sup>8</sup> Prophets who lived in various ages, and were wholly independent of each other—persons of different characters and conditions—are found severally contributing distinct portions to the general *stock of information* respecting the deliverer who was to come. Through their means the church is furnished with a prophetic description of its Head and Saviour, in a marvellous degree precise and comprehensive. His divine name and nature<sup>9</sup>—his incarnation in the nature of man<sup>1</sup>—the nation,<sup>2</sup> the tribe,<sup>3</sup> and the family<sup>4</sup> from which he was to spring—the preaching of his forerunner<sup>5</sup>—his virgin mother<sup>6</sup>—the place of his birth<sup>7</sup>—the date of his coming<sup>8</sup>—his righteous character<sup>9</sup>—the meekness, humility, and kindness of his disposition<sup>1</sup>—his matchless miracles<sup>2</sup>—the unbelief and contempt to which he was exposed<sup>3</sup>—the treason of his familiar friend<sup>4</sup>—his vicarious sufferings and violent death<sup>5</sup>—

<sup>8</sup> Gen. iii, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah ix. 6. Jer. xxiii, 6.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxii, 18.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xlix, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah xi, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah xl, 3. Mal. iii, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah vii, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Micah v, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Dan. ix, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah xi, 5.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlii, 2, 3; 1, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxxv, 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah liii, 1—3.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xli, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah liii, 3—7.



the peculiar circumstances by which it was attended; for example, the piercing of his hands and feet,<sup>6</sup> the scornful motions and taunts of his enemies,<sup>7</sup> the parting of his garments, the casting of lots for his vesture,<sup>8</sup> and the vinegar given him to drink,<sup>9</sup>—his resurrection<sup>1</sup>—his ascension<sup>2</sup>—his intercession<sup>3</sup>—his eternal priesthood<sup>4</sup>—his reign of glory<sup>5</sup>—are all delineated by the pencil of prophecy.

Let the student of scripture compare this delineation with the *history* of Jesus Christ as unfolded in the New Testament, and in the correspondence between the one and the other—in the perfect fitting-in of their respective parts, both prominent circumstances and minute particulars—he will find an evidence of the truth of his religion, of which the cavils of infidelity will never be able to deprive him.

The prophecies respecting Christ and the history of our Saviour in the New Testament, have been elsewhere compared to a lock and key, of a structure so complex and extraordinary as to have no parallel in the world, and yet answering to each other with an easy and perfect exactness.<sup>6</sup> We may now observe, in addition, that as the lock and key are passive under the hand of the mechanic who forms them, and have no power or tendency whatsoever to produce each other, so

<sup>6</sup> Psalm xxii, 16.      <sup>7</sup> Verses 7, 8.      <sup>8</sup> Verse 18.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm lxix, 21.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xvi, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxviii, 18.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah liii, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm cx, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dan. vii, 14, &c.

<sup>6</sup> Essays on Christianity, III. 2nd Edit. p. 60.

it is certain that neither were these prophecies produced by the events, nor the events occasioned by the prophecies.

1. So precise and extensive a correspondence between prophecy and history as is observable in the present example, might possibly induce a suspicion that the predictions had been forged after the events had happened, and were, in fact, a consequence of the history. But such a suspicion will readily vanish when the subject is examined. The scholar is well aware that the existence of these prophecies long before the date of the history is proved, first, by quotations made from the Old Testament, not only by the evangelists and apostles but by other Jewish writers, such as Philo and Josephus; secondly, by a Greek version of the whole Hebrew Scriptures made more than two hundred years before the Christian era; and thirdly, by the very language in which these prophecies were written—that pure Hebrew, which, when Christ was upon earth, the Jews had long since ceased either to speak or to write.

But we have internal evidence of the same truth which is open to every discerning eye. The prophecies respecting our Saviour in the Old Testament are found scattered over a wide surface, and in numerous separate books. Some of them are brief declarations obliquely introduced—thrown in as hints by the way—and, although full of meaning, obscurely expressed. Sometimes they are mingled with predictions respecting the temporal concerns

of the Jews; sometimes they have a subordinate application to some figurative character—such as David or Solomon; and as a whole they are curiously worked into that system of types, which may be described as the peculiar genius of the religion of the Hebrews.

Had it not been for the key with which God has provided us in the New Testament, and which searches the most curious and hidden recesses of the lock, many parts of that lock would for ever have continued latent. It is an important principle, of which we ought never to lose sight in reference to Scripture prophecy, that it can be fully interpreted only by its events. When the history and doctrine of the New Testament are brought to bear upon these predictions, we immediately perceive their relation to a single subject, and not the slightest doubt can any longer be entertained respecting their true meaning. Nevertheless such is their peculiar position and construction, that no man either would or could have forged them.<sup>7</sup> Any attempt to

<sup>7</sup> What a striking illustration of these remarks is afforded us by the following remarkable prophecy respecting our Saviour: "His visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; so shall he sprinkle many nations!" Isaiah lii, 14, 15. This strange combination of ideas was probably quite unintelligible both to the prophet and his hearers. But who can now doubt either the meaning or the divine origin of the prediction? It is the New Testament which teaches us that the sufferings of Jesus were the appointed means not only of our reconciliation with God, but of our obtaining that gift of the Holy Spirit, with which, from his throne of glory, he sprinkles all his believing followers.—See Acts ii, 23—33.

## 22 PROPHECY COMPARED WITH HISTORY.

compose these prophecies and palm them on the world after the date of the events to which they relate, would have been unlikely and absurd, and success in such an undertaking *utterly impossible*.

2. It has often been observed that prophecies which relate to circumstances dependent on the will and power of man, and on the working of human passions, have an inherent tendency to accomplish themselves. Now it is certain that there was no such tendency in those respecting Christ. The incarnation, miracles, resurrection, and ascension, of the Holy One of Israel were events which no human power could either hasten or delay. And his sufferings and atoning death were brought about through the instrumentality of his enemies—persons who were so far from rightly applying the prophecies, that they utterly disregarded and despised the truths which many of them contained. When the Jews refused to believe in Jesus, and rejected their only Saviour; when they led him as a lamb to the slaughter; when they pierced his hands and his feet; when they gave him vinegar mingled with gall to drink; when they mocked him as he was hanging on the cross; when they consigned his body to the rich man's tomb—they little thought that they were affording to the church in all generations, unquestionable proofs that he was the true Messiah.

Since then the prophecies respecting Christ and the events of his history precisely corres-

pond, and since it is certain that the events did not produce the prophecies, nor the prophecies the events, no alternative remains but to ascribe them both to the wisdom and power of God.

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## SECTION III.

## ON THE SUPREME BEING.

EVERY man who reasons fairly from the premises with which nature furnishes us, will confess that the contrivances with which we are surrounded prove the existence of an all-wise Contriver; that their uniform tendency shows the benevolence of God; that the moral character of his government is made known to a considerable extent, in the perceptible order of his providence; and that his holiness may be inferred from the very nature of that law which he has written on the hearts of all men. Yet it must be allowed, that it is chiefly through revelation that we are thus led to reason from creation and providence, and that merely natural religion, even with the additional light of tradition, has left the heathen world in all ages, in a state of great darkness respecting the Supreme Being.

Surely then it is a convincing evidence of the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures, that this darkness is removed wherever the sacred volume is known; and that prophets and apostles have supplied us with an account of

the Deity, so luminous and complete that philosophy itself can demand no addition to it. The several particulars of that account must be familiar to the mind of every serious Christian, and ought to be the frequent subject of his thoughts and contemplation. They may be briefly summed up as follows :

God is *one*. “ Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is *one* Lord.”<sup>1</sup> “ There is no God else beside me ; a just God and a Saviour ; there is none beside me.”<sup>2</sup>

He is the *eternal one*—Jehovah—a name which denotes that he exists absolutely and independently. “ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come.”<sup>3</sup> “ Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.”<sup>4</sup>

He *created the universe*—formed it out of nothing. “ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>5</sup> “ By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.”<sup>6</sup>

He is therefore *omnipotent*. “ I know that thou canst do every thing.”<sup>7</sup> “ The invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power

<sup>1</sup> Deut. vi, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlv, 22. Comp. Matt. iv, 10. 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. i, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xc, 2. Comp. Isa. xlv, 6. James i, 17. Exod. iii, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. i, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm. xxxiii, 6—9. Comp. Isa. xl, 12. xlv, 7. Ps. cxlviii, 1—5.

<sup>7</sup> Job. xlii, 2.

and godhead.”<sup>8</sup> He is also *infinitely skilful*. “He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his *discretion*.”<sup>9</sup> The same attributes he displays in reproduction, in supplying the wants of his creatures, and in maintaining the perpetual order of nature. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man;”<sup>1</sup> “Thou sendest forth thy spirit and they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth.”<sup>2</sup> “In him we live and move, and have our being.”<sup>3</sup>

God is the sole *Ruler* and *Disposer* of the universe which he has made; and he conducts the order of all events with perfect *wisdom*. He is the “blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”<sup>4</sup> “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.”<sup>5</sup> “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for *wisdom* and might are his; and he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings.”<sup>6</sup> “O the depth of the riches both of the *wisdom* and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”<sup>7</sup>

“God is a *Spirit*”<sup>8</sup> “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no

<sup>8</sup> Rom. i, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Jer. x, 12.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. civ, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 30.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xvii, 28.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. vi, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. ciii, 19. Comp. Dan. vii, 9, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Dan. ii, 20, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. xi, 33. Comp. Eph. i, 7, 8.

<sup>8</sup> John iv, 24.

man hath seen or can see.”<sup>9</sup> He is also *omnipresent*. “Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?”<sup>1</sup> “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there,” &c.<sup>2</sup>

He *knows all things*—the past, the present, and the future; “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”<sup>3</sup> “His understanding is infinite.”<sup>4</sup> “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”<sup>5</sup> He perceives the secret thoughts and intentions of his intelligent creatures. “The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts,” &c;<sup>6</sup> “neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight.”<sup>7</sup>

Such are the declarations of Scripture respecting what are called the natural attributes of Jehovah. His moral attributes are displayed, in the same book, with equal clearness.

God is *holy*. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”<sup>8</sup> “The Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works.”<sup>9</sup> He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.”<sup>1</sup> “All that

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. vi, 16. Comp. 1 Tim. i, 17. John i, 18.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxiii, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxxix, 7—10.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xv, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxlvii, 5.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John i, 5.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Chron. xxviii, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. iv, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Isa. vi, 1—3. Comp. Rev. iv, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. cxlv, 17.

<sup>1</sup> Hab. i, 13.



do unrighteously are an *abomination* unto the Lord thy God."<sup>2</sup>

He is *just*, the *moral* Governor of the world, rewarding virtue and punishing vice. "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."<sup>3</sup> In the present world there are many apparent interruptions of God's retributive justice ; but the Scriptures teach us that in the world to come, it will operate without hindrance and through all eternity. " He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit, reap life everlasting."<sup>4</sup> " And these (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal."<sup>5</sup>

God is *equal*.—" Without respect of persons," he " judgeth according to every man's work."<sup>6</sup> " Is not my way equal, saith the Lord ?"<sup>7</sup> " God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."<sup>8</sup> The servant who " knew his Lord's will " and did it not, " shall be beaten with many stripes, but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxv, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. vi, 8.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. i, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Acts x, 34, 35

<sup>3</sup> Isa. iii, 10, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxv, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xviii, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Luke xii, 47, 48.

He is *good*, abounding in kindness towards his creatures, our bounteous Protector and Father. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> God "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not....every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."<sup>2</sup> "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain, on the just and on the unjust."<sup>3</sup> Yet his beneficence is directed, with peculiar effect, towards his obedient children, whom he supports and comforts under every trial, and whose afflictions he applies to their highest welfare. "But thou Israel art my servant, the seed of Abraham my friend....fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."<sup>4</sup> "All things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose."<sup>5</sup>

God is *merciful*; and his mercy is, of all his attributes, the most frequently alluded to in Scripture. "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."<sup>6</sup> "Let the wicked

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxiii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> James i, 5, 17. Comp. Ps. cxlv, 9. Acts xiv, 15—17.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. xli, 8—10. Comp. Ps. xci, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7.

forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.”<sup>7</sup> The mercy of God is nearly identical with his *love*, under the pure impulse of which towards our fallen world, “he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”<sup>8</sup> “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”<sup>9</sup> “But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Finally, He is *faithful* or *true*.—“The word of our God shall stand for ever.”<sup>2</sup> “His truth endureth to all generations.”<sup>3</sup> “Also the strength of Israel will not lie.”<sup>4</sup> “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.”<sup>5</sup> In this attribute, we have an unfailing warrant that his law is unalterable, that his judgments will be executed, that his mercies are sure, and that his promises are “yea” and “amen” for ever.

Such is Jehovah, as described in the sacred volume— the only true God, eternal, the Creator and Ruler of all things, a Spirit, omnipresent, almighty, omniscient, perfectly wise; holy, just, equal, benevolent, long-suffering,

<sup>7</sup> Isa. lv, 7. Comp. Ps. cxxx, 4, 7. Lam. iii, 22.

<sup>1</sup> John i, 9.

<sup>8</sup> John iii, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. v, 8.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii, 4, 5.

Comp. 1 John iv, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xl, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. c, 5.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. xv, 29.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. ii, 13. Comp. Heb. x, 23. Ps. cxi, 9.

merciful and true. Now these divine attributes are blended, but not confused. They do not weaken, much less nullify each other, but existing severally and unalterably in infinite strength, they meet and combine in perfect union.

This harmony and nice adjustment of the various attributes ascribed in Scripture to the Supreme Being, must strike every reflecting mind. His sole existence from eternity, coincides with his creating all things; his spirituality with his pervading all things; his omnipresence with his knowing all things. How dreadful would be his omnipotence, were it not combined with perfect wisdom! And how worthy is it of all admiration, that although able to effect all things immediately by his *fiat*, he ever makes use of means, that his wisdom may be made known to his rational creatures!

Were he not the omnipotent sovereign of the universe, he could not be its *moral* governor. Were he not omniscient, he could not render to every man according to his deeds. His holiness is the basis of his justice; his justice is inseparably connected with his equity.

Above all, in the Christian doctrine of *atonement*, we find a solution of that most difficult moral problem—how God can forgive and save a sinful race, consistently with the due maintenance of his law. God is “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”<sup>6</sup> In sending his only-begotten Son into the world

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iii, 26.

to bear the penalty of our sins, he has shown forth in glorious union, his holiness and his love—his abhorrence of sin, and his mercy to the sinner.

Now the information which the Bible gives, respecting the Supreme Being, whether considered as a harmonious whole, or viewed in its principal details, is to be found originally in the Bible *alone*. Whatsoever of correct theology is to be met with in the pages of modern Christians, or even of deists, is borrowed from the sacred volume—a remark which also applies to all that is true in the religion of Mahomet.

With respect to the ancient heathen philosophers, their best notions respecting the Supreme Being, were probably derived from original revelation, as well as from the light of reason and conscience. Yet these notions were fluctuating and imperfect, often tending on the one hand towards idolatry, and on the other, towards that absurd doctrine of pantheism, which identifies all created things with their Creator, and makes the universe, God. To compare the theology even of Plato and Socrates, with that of Moses, David, or Isaiah, is to compare the shades of twilight, with the full blaze of day. When we consider, that the Athenians were a highly civilized people, remarkable for the cultivation of their mental powers, and that the Jews were comparatively unpolished and ignorant; it seems impossible to account for this difference by any thing short of the doctrine laid down by

Paul—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

This argument is addressed to the scholar. To the unlettered man, we may safely appeal on the simple ground that the account which he finds in the Bible of the Creator and Governor of the universe—the Father of every rational being—corresponds with his own sense of all that is holy and sublime. When he reflects on the strength and beauty of its several parts, and on the harmony of the mighty whole, his soul is raised and illuminated. There is a sure witness in his own heart and understanding, that this account of God is true; and that, being true, it flows not from the polluted springs of man's wisdom, but from the fountain of *all* truth, even from God himself.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### ON THE MORAL LAW.

It is one of the properties of truth that it bears to be examined from various points of view, and that its several features under whatsoever light they are regarded, are found substantially to accord. What but truth can account for the undesigned and unforced, yet clear coincidence, between the moral attributes of as revealed to us in Scripture, and the communicated to mankind, through the medium?

God is holy, and he requires of his creature man a corresponding purity of heart and conduct. He is true and faithful, and his law demands a universal integrity. He is just and equitable, and whatsoever power we have over others, as parents, as masters, or as magistrates, must be applied with even-handed justice and strict impartiality. He showers down upon us innumerable gifts, and at the same time, commands us liberally to dispense the blessings which we receive. In his mercy, he forgives our iniquities; and by his moral code, he binds us to forgive one another. Notwithstanding our ingratitude and rebellion, he continues to bless us both temporally and spiritually; he suffers long and is kind; and what are the parallel precepts of his law?—that we should return good for evil, melt down our enemies with charity, and exercise towards all around us, meekness, patience, and forbearance. Finally, “God is *love* ;” and the Scripture teaches us, that “*love* is the fulfilling of the law.”

The moral law, as revealed in Scripture, partakes of the character of its Author, first because it prescribes the practice of every virtue, and is therefore “holy, and just, and good ;”<sup>7</sup> and secondly, because it is “spiritual”—insinuating itself into the heart, reaching the spirit, and convincing the understanding.<sup>8</sup> It applies to all circumstances, comprehends all conditions, regulates all motives, directs and controuls all overt acts.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. vii, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Verse v, 14.

No man who is acquainted with its precepts, and has observed their tendency, will refuse to set his seal to the following declaration: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them, there is great reward."<sup>9</sup>

The moral precepts contained in the writings of some of the ancient philosophers, especially in those of Plato and Cicero, appear to afford one evidence among many, that some traces of the law of God are to be found in the hearts of all men. Although, however these philosophers were gifted with an insight into the beauty and reasonableness of virtue, it is possible that they might derive part of their information on morals indirectly from the Jews, or from original revelation; and after all, it must be confessed that their morality, like their theology, was both variable and defective. There were in it two fundamental weaknesses, producing a fearful void which revelation alone could fill. It was destitute of a standard, and of adequate motives.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. xix, 7—11.



The standard proposed by the Stoics was, the "eternal fitness of things;" by the Epicureans, "that which produces happiness;" and by the Academicians, "a resemblance to the highest good." Now it is quite evident that each of these notions, (not excepting the last, which has some show of godliness,) leaves the whole subject a prey to the speculation and imagination of men; and therefore in a state of dark and hopeless uncertainty. It is the Bible, and the Bible only, which declares a standard of morals, universally applicable to our need, and liable to no change. That standard is the revealed will or *law* of God. The voice of Christianity proclaims that only to be virtue which the law of God prescribes, and that only to be vice by which the law is broken.

In proportion as the standard of morals is variable or uncertain, the motives to action become inoperative; because they are not excited in the mind by any clear principle, or by any acknowledged authority; and this is probably one principal reason why the practice of many of the wisest of the heathen, fell so far short of their own theories of virtue and religion.

The desire of happiness, for example—the motive of the Epicurean philosophers—is in itself a strong one; yet as long as the line of conduct which produces the greatest happiness is left to be fixed by mere human wisdom, so long will this motive induce mankind to gratify their propensities, rather than deny

themselves any present enjoyment for the sake of a possible future good.

But the motives to action presented to us in Scripture, are of the most binding and influential nature. They are the *fear and love of God*. The Bible declares, that the law of righteousness is the law of the moral Governor of the universe, who made us, who has a right to dispose of us as he pleases, and who will render to every one of us according to our deeds. We are therefore prepared to understand the full force of the precept, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>1</sup> But the Being whom we are thus taught to fear, is presented to us in Scripture, as the object of our *love*, partly because he is in himself perfectly lovely—the spring and centre of all goodness,—but chiefly because he has so abundantly displayed his love and bounty towards ourselves.

Hence the first and great commandment of the law is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."<sup>2</sup> Christianity represents this commandment, as lying at the foundation of all true morality, because while it points out our first duty, it supplies us with a motive, which leads to the right performance of every other duty.

And here we may briefly remark, that the holding of the *law* of God keeps pace, in Scripture, with the revelation of his *love*.

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. xii, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxii, 37.

For many ages before the birth of Moses, the traces of that great scheme of redemption, by which the love of God to man is *chiefly* displayed, were probably faint, and the known requirements of his law appear to have been limited. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the fore-shadows and prophecies of Christ became clearer and more abundant, and the moral law was strengthened and defined in proportion. Under the gospel, the love of God in Christ Jesus is explicitly revealed to us, and our *gratitude* thereby called into full action ; and at the same time, the law is developed in all its spirituality, and all its comprehensiveness. The extent of obedience required has been adapted, in every stage of the progress of truth, to the strength of the motive supplied. Yet that motive is always the same—*the love of God, who “ first loved us.”*

Now I conceive that the infinite superiority of the sacred writers to all uninspired moralists, with respect to these main points—a fixed standard and adequate motives—affords a plain evidence that they wrote by inspiration—that theirs and theirs only, is the religion of God.

But we shall come to the same conclusion, if we examine the morality of Scripture in some of its details. Let the literary sceptic peruse our Saviour’s sermon on the mount ; and let him carefully reflect on its principles and its precepts.

Where shall he look, among the heathen, for a moral code like this ? Where shall he lay

his finger on any similar display of the nature of virtue? Where for example can he find anything in the pages of Plato or Cicero, on the same *level* with the declaration, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" What would the Greek and Roman moralists furnish in the room of those nicely balanced sayings, each so important in its place, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," and "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth?" Or what would they enable us to substitute for the golden rule "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them?"

What mean the praises of meekness and patience, of submission and resignation, with which the Scripture abounds? what, the unceasing calls to communion with God,—prayer and supplication? These are articles of the code of Christianity which are greatly opposed to the natural pride of man, and which vary, in the same degree, from the dictates of uninspired wisdom. Yet every one knows that they work well in practice; even one *ought* to acknowledge that they come from God.

There is no virtue on which the Scripture more frequently insists than *humility*. "The sacrifices of God," said David, "are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,"<sup>3</sup>—a confession which

<sup>3</sup> Psalm li, 17.

remarkably agrees with the words of our Lord, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;"<sup>4</sup> and again, "Who-soever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."<sup>5</sup> The heathen moralists, who prided themselves on the excellence and dignity of their nature, would have been at a loss to comprehend these sayings. Such precepts are in fact directly opposed to their systems of philosophy. Yet what Christian is not aware that lowliness of mind and a broken spirit lie at the very root of moral excellence, and are useful beyond almost every other grace, in promoting the order and happiness of our species?

Lastly, the *charity* enjoined upon us in the New Testament is very different from that arbitrary and uncertain benevolence, which is dictated by our natural feelings. Christian charity is indeed a virtue of heavenly birth and efficacy. It springs immediately from love for God, and having thus a right origin, it spreads towards the whole family of man, embraces enemies as well as friends, extends to thoughts as well as actions, and is steadily directed to the spiritual as well as temporal good of our neighbour. Were that second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," allowed to take the range assigned to it in the gospel, it would soon put an end to all malice, oppression, and bloodshed, and would ~~be~~ <sup>is</sup> contentious.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v, 3.

<sup>5</sup> xiv, 11.

world into one unvarying scene of harmon and peace.

In drawing a comparison between the ethic of the ancient philosophers, and the moral law contained in Scripture, we again address ourselves to the scholar. But in making our appeal to the man who reads his Bible *only*, we may inquire of him whether that law does not meet the best feelings of his mind, and coincide in all its parts with the decisions of his conscience; whether it is not marvellously clear and comprehensive; whether he does not find it, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a safe guide in all the exigencies of life and lastly, whether he is not happy and at rest precisely in the degree in which he conforms himself to its rules. If he be a person of integrity and reflection, he will be sure to answer these questions in the affirmative; and in doing so, he will furnish himself and others with a satisfactory evidence that the law of Christianity, is the LAW OF GOD.

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## SECTION V.

### ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

THE harmonious view presented to us in Scripture of the moral attributes of God, and of the law by which he governs mankind, truly *philosophical*; for the ethical virtues such as holiness, justice, truth, and benevolence, can never change their tendencie

They are the same in their nature and character, whether they be regarded as the essential attributes of the Creator, or as the borrowed graces of the creature. Hence it follows that as the face of a man is seen reflected in a glass, so are the moral attributes of the Deity seen reflected, under whatsoever diminution, in the conduct and character of those persons, who believe and obey him. So it was with our first parents before their fall ; and we may presume it to have been chiefly for this reason, that they are said to have been formed in the “ image,” and after the “ likeness,” of God.<sup>6</sup>

This image or likeness which was lost in man by the fall, is restored to him by redemption ; and believers in Jesus Christ again become, although at an immeasurable distance, “ followers of God.”<sup>7</sup> It is evident that on this doctrine is founded that awful precept, “ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>8</sup>

Since however the Almighty and his attributes are infinite, and in various respects above our reach, and since we are called to the practice of many virtues which peculiarly belong to our dependent state as creatures, it is a delightful evidence of the wisdom and love of God, that in his incarnate Son he has provided us with a model, at once perfect, and accommodated to *all* our need. In him, the whole law of God is embodied, and as

<sup>6</sup> Gen. i, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Eph. v, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. v, 48.

it were personified, for the instruction of man kind.

The first moral quality which we ought to notice in the character of our Saviour, is *purity of heart*. It was his own doctrine that "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."<sup>9</sup> He is described by one apostle, as "a lamb without blemish and without spot;"<sup>1</sup> and by another, as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."<sup>2</sup> It is expressly declared that he "did no sin;"<sup>3</sup> that "in him is no sin;"<sup>4</sup> and the doctrine of his perfect purity is proved, by the fact, that his death was *expiatory*; for except the offering be spotless, there can be no atonement made by it, for sin.

With stainless purity, in Jesus, was united a perfect *integrity*. He was the "just," as well as "holy, one."<sup>5</sup> "Righteousness" was "the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."<sup>6</sup> No "guile" was "found in his mouth."<sup>7</sup> He was himself "the truth."<sup>8</sup> He spake the plain truth to the most powerful of his enemies, and unmasked their hypocrisy in open day.

In publicly reproving iniquity, in pronouncing woes on Jerusalem and other rebellious cities, in driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and in calling upon all men to

<sup>9</sup> Matt. v, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vii, 26.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John iii, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. xi, 5.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i, 19.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. ii, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Acts iii, 14.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Pet. ii, 22.

<sup>8</sup> John xiv, 6.



repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, he displayed an undaunted *courage*, and a resistless *zeal* for the honour of God. His disciples remembered that it was written of him "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up."<sup>9</sup>

Yet these qualities were remarkably distinguished from rashness. During the course of his ministry he evinced a remarkable degree of *prudence*; and in conformity to his own precept, was not only "harmless as the dove," but "wise as the serpent." He shunned the breath of popularity; suffered not his admirers to make him a king;<sup>1</sup> forbad the premature publication of his office as the Messiah; and often retired into desert and solitary places. He would not tempt God by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, when duty did not call for the sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> The divine *wisdom* of Jesus was also manifested in the skill with which he silenced the cavils of his opposers, in the exquisite simplicity and appositeness of his parables, and in his converting every object which attracted his attention into a fresh channel for instruction.

Closely connected with the quality of courage, is that of *fortitude*. The latter virtue was displayed by our Lord in a wonderful manner after he had been betrayed into the hands of his enemies. The conflicts which he had undergone in the garden of Gethsemane, and his solemn communion there with his heavenly Father, appeared to be a

<sup>9</sup> John ii, 17.

<sup>1</sup> John vi, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iv, 7.

preparation for that *calm fearlessness* which he afterwards displayed in meeting a cruel and ignominious death. It was a signal proof of the firmness with which he endured his agonies, as well as of the kindness of his spirit, that while he was hanging on the cross, his mind was directed even to the temporal welfare of his friends: "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!"<sup>3</sup>

The moderate enjoyment of temporal blessings, with giving of thanks, Jesus encouraged by his example. When he mingled with the joyful company at Cana, and turned the water into wine, and when he so multiplied the loaves and fishes, that they became the superabundant food of thousands, he displayed a *holy liberality*. Yet he triumphed over bodily indulgence, and willingly submitted to the severest personal privations, for righteousness' sake. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man" had "not where to lay his head."<sup>4</sup> What could surpass the sublime self-denial of his answer, when after he had been fasting forty days and forty nights, the devil tempted him to convert the stones into bread? "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John xix, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. viii, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. iv, 2—4.

He was absolutely free from worldliness and ambition; refused all the honours and kingdoms which "the prince of this world" could offer him,<sup>6</sup> and chose a life of deep poverty. His whole career was marked by a perfect *disinterestedness*. But we must follow him to Gethsemane, and mark his agony and bloody sweat; we must behold him crowned with thorns, mocked by his enemies and bowing under the weight of his cross; we must go with him to Mount Calvary, and reflect on the anguish and dark horrors of his death, when the sins of all mankind were resting upon him; and with these depths of humiliation and suffering, we must compare his former elevation,—the unspeakable happiness and glory from which he abstained. Thus, and thus alone, can we form any adequate notion of his *self-renunciation*.

This self-renunciation was prompted by pure *benevolence*, a quality which abounded in the character of our Saviour. His soul was filled with tenderness, and overflowed with love. He wept over the woes of Jerusalem, and over the grave of Lazarus. His miracles were for the most part works of mercy and compassion as well as of power. His benevolence was indeed productive of unceasing *beneficence*. "He went about doing good,"<sup>7</sup>—preaching the gospel to the poor, feeding the hungry, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the withered, health to the sick,

<sup>6</sup> Matt. iv, 9, 10. Comp. John xiv, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Acts x, 38.

and life to the very dead. Nor was his love restricted to his friends; it flowed freely towards his enemies. In the midst of the bitterness of death, he prayed for his persecutors, saying, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."<sup>8</sup>

His tenderness towards children was a remarkable trait in his character. He would suffer no man to drive them away from him, but took them up in his arms and blessed them. He said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."<sup>9</sup>

The righteous indignation which Jesus displayed in the reproof of vicious men, may be profitably compared with his *meekness* and *quietness in suffering*. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not."<sup>1</sup> He bore the contradiction of sinners and the taunts of his opposers, with immovable patience. He appears to have possessed an absolute command over all his feelings. His temper was like the dove's—incapable of being ruffled.

Another instructive contrast may be drawn between the *dignity* and *lowliness* of Jesus. He never forgot that just self-respect which leads to the inviolate maintenance of the rightful post of duty. Wherever he went, he carried about with him the dignity of a perfect virtue, and to this were often added the mysterious influence and authority of a divine

<sup>8</sup> Luke xxiii, 34.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xix, 14.

power.<sup>2</sup> Yet he was "lowly in heart."<sup>3</sup> He came not "to be ministered unto, but to minister."<sup>4</sup> He "took upon him the form of a servant."<sup>5</sup> He was obedient, during his youth, to his earthly parents.<sup>6</sup> He paid tribute to Cæsar, as a faithful subject. He performed for his disciples the lowest offices of kindness and courtesy.<sup>7</sup>

Christianity teaches us that the *love of God* is the foundation of all moral excellence; and Jesus exemplified this doctrine in his whole life, which was one of unexampled, uninterrupted, *godliness*. He delighted in communion with his heavenly Father, and spent whole nights in prayer.<sup>8</sup> Nor was it for himself alone that he communed with his God. His soul overflowed with intercession on behalf of his believing followers.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, he was in all things conformed to the will of his Father. In obedience to that will he came down from heaven; in obedience to it he lived and died on earth. His works were the Father's works, and his words the Father's words.<sup>1</sup> "My meat," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work."<sup>2</sup> Nor was it in doing only, but also in suffering, that he was devoted without a murmur to the will of God. "O my Fa-

2 See Matt. viii, 26. xiv, 25—32. xxi, 12. Luke v, 8. John xviii, 6. 3 Matt. xi, 29.  
4 Matt. xx, 28. 5 Phil. ii, 7.  
6 Luke ii, 51. 7 John xiii, 5.  
8 Luke vi, 12. 9 John xvii.  
1 John x, 37. xvii, 8. 2 John iv, 34.

ther," he cried, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,"<sup>3</sup>—"not my will, but thine be done."<sup>4</sup>

Such was the moral character of the Saviour of men; a most astonishing combination of purity, integrity, faithfulness, courage, zeal, fortitude, prudence, liberality, temperance, disinterestedness, heavenly-mindedness, meekness, humility, patience, and charity, all founded on an immeasurable love towards God the Father, and on a perfect obedience to his will.

Here it ought to be remarked that as the followers of Jesus, in their pursuit of moral excellence, are taught to place their dependence on the influence of the Spirit of God, so Christ, their holy Head, was endued with the same influence, but *without measure*.<sup>5</sup> He was the "anointed one" of the Father. He produced, in unspeakable ripeness and abundance, that "fruit of the Spirit" which is "in all goodness and righteousness and truth,"<sup>6</sup> and which, in a smaller measure, is borne by all those who love, serve, and follow him.

In applying the foregoing statement to the argument now before us, we have in the first place to remark that the gospels contain, in themselves, a sufficient evidence that the character of Jesus Christ, as developed by the evangelists, is true—that it was taken from

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi, 39.

<sup>5</sup> John iii, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxii, 42.

<sup>6</sup> Ephes. v, 9.

the life. Although for the sake of clearness we have stated its several particulars in a regular series, these authors have adopted no such method. A panegyric of their divine Master however just and merited, and a formal declaration of his virtues however incontrovertible, formed no part of their plan. They were engaged in the duty of faithful narration, and the character of their Lord comes out and is made apparent, as it were by accident, in the history of those various events, by which it was tried, and in the course of which it was unfolded.

The simplicity and native charm of the narrative, are such as no fiction can imitate. And let it be remembered that the history of the life and death of Jesus is recorded by *four* writers, each of whom (while they state *many* things in common) contributes, to the general account of him, a variety of particulars to which the others have not adverted. The faultless and perfectly original character of Jesus stands out to view, as the glorious result of their combined descriptions.

That the delineation of such a person should be sustained, even by a single writer, without any lapse, and should produce a portrait without any blemish, would be extremely improbable, were the tale fictitious. But that so many distinct and evidently independent writers, should have described the conduct and deportment of Jesus, under so great a variety of circumstances, and still no inconsistency be found in the narrative, no flaw in the charac-

ter—is a fact for which nothing can possibly account, but the truth of the whole statement.

Since then our Saviour's character, as portrayed in the New Testament, was real, we may receive it as a sure evidence, that the religion which he taught is *divine*. For in the first place, we are bound by the laws of testimony, by plain reason, and by common sense, to receive as *true*, whatsoever was affirmed by a man of *perfect* morality. And secondly, the character of Jesus, considered as an essential part of a religious system, is in itself a strong internal proof that God—the Fountain of all virtue and loveliness—is the Author of Christianity. In vain should we search for the description of such a character in the pages either of profane history, or of uninspired philosophy. It stands unrivalled and alone, a masterpiece of divine wisdom and power, stamped with the image of the most high God.

Between the requirements of the law, and the example of the lawgiver there is no shadow of disagreement. Let the inquirer after truth reflect on this coincidence; let him examine the nice and easy fitting in of the law with the pattern, and of the pattern with the law, and he will be constrained to confess that both originate with that God of harmony, whose works alone tally with a perfect precision.



## SECTION VI.

## ON THE GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE SAVIOUR.

WHEN conversing with the Jews respecting his own attributes, Jesus Christ appealed to the Scriptures as witnesses to the truths which he uttered—"They are they which testify of me;"<sup>1</sup> So also the apostle Paul asserts that the "holy Scriptures" are able to make "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Our Lord and his apostle here referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but their doctrine is applicable with still greater force to those of the New Testament. The sacred writers of both dispensations unite in testifying of Christ; and on the other hand, the description which they give of him, reflects its glory on the Scriptures, and bears witness to the inspiration under which they were composed.

In order to do justice to our present argument therefore, we must by no means confine ourselves to our Lord's human life and moral character; we must endeavour to take a comprehensive view of his nature, history, and offices, as the *Son of God*, and *Saviour of the world*.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, he proceeded forth from God the Father and

<sup>1</sup> John v, 39.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii, 15.

came down from heaven.<sup>3</sup> He was therefore with the Father and in heaven, before his birth. He existed before John the baptist;<sup>4</sup> and before Abraham himself.<sup>5</sup> He was the Lord of David,<sup>6</sup> and the living Redeemer of Job.<sup>7</sup> He was with God in glory before the foundation of the world<sup>8</sup>—the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last;”<sup>9</sup> his “goings forth have been from of old from everlasting.”<sup>1</sup>

He is the Son of God, “the only-begotten of the Father,”<sup>2</sup> begotten before any thing was created.<sup>3</sup> He is the power and wisdom of God<sup>4</sup>—the Word by whom God acts and in whom he is made manifest to his creatures. He is the “image of the invisible God,”<sup>5</sup> “the express image of his person (or substance).”<sup>6</sup>

He was “in the form of God” and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God”<sup>7</sup>—one with the Father,<sup>8</sup> and therefore himself God. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”<sup>9</sup>

“All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was

<sup>3</sup> John iii, 13. xvi, 28.

<sup>4</sup> John i, 15.

<sup>5</sup> John viii, 56—58.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. cx, i.

<sup>7</sup> Job xix, 23—26.

<sup>8</sup> John xvii, 5, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. xxii, 13.

<sup>1</sup> Mic. v, 2.

<sup>2</sup> John i, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i, 15. πρωτοτόκος πάσης κτίσεως.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. i, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Col. i, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. i, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Phil. ii, 6.

<sup>8</sup> John x, 30.

<sup>9</sup> John i, 1.

made."<sup>1</sup> "The world was made by him."<sup>2</sup> God made the worlds by his Son.<sup>3</sup> By the Son "were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him."<sup>4</sup>

By him also "all things consist."<sup>5</sup> He upholds all things "by the word of his power;"<sup>6</sup> and he is himself unchangeable—"the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."<sup>7</sup>

He was "that eternal life which was with the Father."<sup>8</sup> "In him was life, and the life was the light of men;"<sup>9</sup> he was "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."<sup>1</sup> He preached by his Spirit to the world before the flood.<sup>2</sup> He inspired the prophets who spake concerning himself.<sup>3</sup> He was the spiritual rock, who miraculously supplied the wants of the Israelites<sup>4</sup>—the leader whom they tempted to their own destruction.<sup>5</sup> When the law was delivered from mount Sinai, his "voice shook the earth."<sup>6</sup>

We have abundant reasons for identifying him with the "Angel of the covenant," who conversed with Abraham,<sup>7</sup> received the vows

<sup>1</sup> John i, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. i, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Verse 17.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. xiii, 8.

<sup>9</sup> John i, 4.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. iii, 19.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. x, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. xii, 26.

<sup>2</sup> John i, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Col. i, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. i, 3.

<sup>8</sup> 1 John i, 2.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 9.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. i, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Verse 9.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. xviii, 1.

of Jacob,<sup>8</sup> and “redeemed” him “from all evil;”<sup>9</sup> revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush;<sup>1</sup> led the Israelites through the desert, in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night;<sup>2</sup> appeared to Joshua, in the character of the captain of the Lord’s host;<sup>3</sup> drove out the Canaanites from the land of promise;<sup>4</sup> and was manifested in his divine character and glory to Isaiah,<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel,<sup>6</sup> Daniel,<sup>7</sup> Amos,<sup>8</sup> and Zechariah.<sup>9</sup> He was the ever present helper and governor of God’s people, the object of their fear, their love, and their allegiance. In him was the name of his Father; he was arrayed in the attributes of God.<sup>1</sup> He acted and spake on behalf of Jehovah, and *was* Jehovah.<sup>2</sup>

In the fulness of time—at the precise date, in the very place, of the nation, tribe, and family, predicted by the prophets, the “Word was made flesh”<sup>3</sup>—“made of a woman, made under the law.”<sup>4</sup> “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.”<sup>5</sup> He was clothed with a human body<sup>6</sup> and a human soul,<sup>7</sup> and having before been God only, he now became

<sup>8</sup> Gen. xxxi, 11—13.      <sup>9</sup> Gen. xlviii, 16.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. iii, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xiv, 19. Comp. xiii, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Josh. v, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xxiii, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. vi, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ezek. i, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Dan. x, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Amos vii, 6, 7, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Zech. i, 1—13.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxiii, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xix, 24.

<sup>3</sup> John i, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iv, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. ii, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. x, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxvi, 38.

God and man.<sup>8</sup> "God was manifest in the flesh."<sup>9</sup>

He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary,<sup>1</sup> and his name was called "Emmanuel, God with us,"<sup>2</sup> Then did the shepherds hear the angel saying "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

Before Jesus commenced his ministry, came John the Baptist, than whom there had arisen "no greater prophet,"<sup>4</sup> to usher in the coming of "the Highest,"<sup>5</sup> to prepare "the way of the LORD."<sup>6</sup> He pointed out Jesus to the people, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>7</sup>

After receiving the Holy Ghost, and after being confessed of the Father as his "beloved Son,"<sup>8</sup> Jesus commenced his ministry, which burst forth with matchless power and brightness. He promulgated the purest code of morality ever listened to by the ear of man;<sup>9</sup> he "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."<sup>1</sup> He developed the moral government of God, and the responsibility of man, and unveiled the awful secrets of eternity.<sup>2</sup> On more private occasions he

<sup>8</sup> Heb. ii, 14—18.

<sup>1</sup> Luke i, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ii, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Luke i, 76.

<sup>7</sup> John i, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. v, vi, vii.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. iii, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. i, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xi, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Luke iii, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. iii, 13—17.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii, xxv.

declared those mysterious doctrines of atonement and regeneration,<sup>3</sup> which were afterwards to be proclaimed by his inspired apostles, to the whole world.

The ministry of Jesus was accompanied by wonderful works, wrought by the power of the Spirit of God, and by his own power. These miracles, were for the most part, public in their performance, sudden in their operation, and marvellously great in their effects.

While our Lord was on earth, abundant evidence was afforded both of his humanity and of his deity. On the one hand, he lay a helpless infant in the manger; increased in wisdom and stature as he advanced in years; performed the laborious functions of a minister; was tempted by Satan; thought, wept, spake, and prayed, like ourselves; was afflicted, insulted, tormented, and finally expired on the cross and was consigned to the grave, a corpse. On the other hand, he searched the hearts and knew the secret thoughts of his hearers; reversed the order of nature; controuled the stormy elements; raised the dead to life; asserted his equality and union with the Father;<sup>4</sup> and accepted those honours which were due to God alone. When Thomas "answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God," Jesus approved his confession of faith, and said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> John iii.      <sup>4</sup> John v, 19—23. x, 30.      <sup>5</sup> John xx, 29.

The great purpose for which the Son of God took our nature upon him was the redemption of mankind ; and this purpose could be effected, according to the eternal counsels of the Father, only through his *atoning death*.

“ The Son of man, came to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>6</sup> He became incarnate “ that *through death*, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.”<sup>7</sup>

“ Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.”<sup>8</sup> “ Through the eternal Spirit,” (he) “ offered himself without spot to God.”<sup>9</sup> “ Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”<sup>1</sup>

This cardinal doctrine of Christianity is foreshown by the types of the law, declared by the prophets, stated in plain terms by Jesus himself, and fully unfolded by the apostles. Nor was it for one part of mankind in preference to another, that Jesus died. He “ tasted death for every man.”<sup>2</sup> He came to save “ the world.”<sup>3</sup> He was “ the propitiation” (or atonement) for the sins of the “ whole world.”<sup>4</sup>

The death of Jesus, like his birth, was attended by circumstances which indicated his divine dignity. Through the space of three noon-day hours a miraculous darkness covered the whole land ; and when he “ yielded up

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xx, 28.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. iii, 18.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix, 26.

<sup>3</sup> John iii, 16, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. ii, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. ix, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii, 9.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John ii, 2.

the ghost," the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the earth quaked, and many bodies of the saints who slept arose.<sup>5</sup> And here it ought to be remarked, that as the humanity of Jesus was the sole medium through which he made atonement for sin—for he died only as man—so it was his divinity—his Sonship—his perfect oneness with the Father—which alone imparted to his death its mighty efficacy for the salvation of sinners.<sup>6</sup>

On the same principle, it was through the medium of his humanity, that Jesus fulfilled the whole law of God, and bequeathed to his disciples in every age a perfect pattern for the regulation of their conduct. Yet surely it is because of his infinite worth and dignity in the glorious Godhead, that Christ becomes "*our righteousness*,"<sup>7</sup> and that his righteousness, imputed to believers, procures for them the reward of a happy immortality.

"It was not possible" that Jesus "should be holden of death."<sup>8</sup> His body saw no corruption.<sup>9</sup> On the morning of the third day, by his own power,<sup>1</sup> and by the power of the Father,<sup>2</sup> he arose from the dead, and was seen first by the women, next by Simon Peter, then by all the apostles, and afterwards by "five hundred brethren at once."<sup>3</sup> These all bare witness to the glorious fact of his resurrection,

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxvii, 45—52.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. v, 19.    <sup>1</sup> John v, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Jer. xxiii, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Acts ii, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Psal. xvi, 10.

<sup>1</sup> John x, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii, 32.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv, 6.



by which fact were for ever established the reality of his mission, the efficacy of his sacrifice, and the completeness of his victory over Satan. God hath "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."<sup>4</sup>

After conversing occasionally with his disciples during forty days, he met them on Mount Bethany, and there was taken up from them, and "a cloud received him out of their sight."<sup>5</sup> He ascended into heaven and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."<sup>6</sup> God "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus Christ, in his exaltation is both king and priest. As king, he reigns supreme over the universal church, militant on earth and glorified in heaven, and he rules over the universe for the church's sake.<sup>8</sup> As priest, he reconciles us to his Father through his blood, ministers to all our spiritual need, rebukes our adversary, pleads our cause,<sup>9</sup> and ever lives to make intercession for us.<sup>1</sup>

He is the mediator between God and man, in whom "all fulness" dwells,<sup>2</sup> and who still unites in himself the human and the divine

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. i, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. i, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Eph. i, 22.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Acts i; 9.

<sup>7</sup> Eph. i, 20, 21.

<sup>9</sup> 1 John ii, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i, 19.

natures. In virtue of the former, he is "the first-born from the dead,"<sup>3</sup> whose resurrection is the pledge of ours; and having been tempted in all points like as we are, (though "without sin,") he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.<sup>4</sup> In virtue of the latter, he bestows upon his church all spiritual gifts and graces, and with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the object of religious adoration to the whole rational creation.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, at the hour appointed in the hidden counsels of the Father,<sup>6</sup> he will come again with great glory to judge the quick and the dead.<sup>7</sup> Then shall we hail his *manhood* as essential to his *sympathy*, and admire the equity of God who has "committed all judgment" unto Jesus, "*because* he is the Son of man."<sup>8</sup> Then also will he gloriously display his godhead, by raising the countless multitudes of the dead;<sup>9</sup> by folding up the earth and heavens as a garment;<sup>1</sup> by detecting the secrets of all hearts;<sup>2</sup> and by rendering to every man according to his deeds.

At that momentous period, according to the Scriptures, the whole economy of redemption will be completed, and the Son will resign his mediatorial authority to the Father from whom he received it.<sup>3</sup> Yet will he never lose

<sup>3</sup> Col. i, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. iv, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. ii, 10, 11. Heb. i, 6. Rev. v, 12, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxiv, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxv, 31.

<sup>8</sup> John v, 22, 27.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. xv, 52. Phil. iii, 21.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. ii, 23.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv, 28.

the distinctive character of the Lamb immaculate,<sup>4</sup> and with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he will reign "over all" everlastingly,—"God blessed for ever."<sup>5</sup>

Such is the general account given to us in the Bible of the nature, history, and offices of the Saviour of mankind. The passages here cited are both numerous and clear; and to these might easily be added a multitude of others which bear a corresponding and confirming testimony to the same truths.

In adducing this account as an internal evidence of the inspiration of its authors, we may, in the first place, notice its *originality*. Nothing can be more novel and extraordinary—nothing more unlike the inventions of man—than the various parts of which it is composed; and taken as a whole, this delineation of the Deliverer of our fallen race is absolutely singular and unrivalled. Plato indeed entertained some wandering notions respecting "word" or "reason" as forming part of the Deity; but who for a moment would compare these notions, with the luminous description given in Scripture of the Word of God, who is the brightness of God's glory, one with Jehovah, bearing his name, participating in his attributes, and therefore truly God?

Again we are aware that gross superstitions respecting incarnate deities distinguish the idolatry of the Hindoos and some other heathen nations; and these superstitions may

<sup>4</sup> Rev. xxi, 23, xxii, 1, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. ix, 5.

possibly be the hideous and distorted imitations of truth. But where shall we hear of any thing comparable to the union described in Scripture, of perfect humanity and perfect deity, in our Lord Jesus Christ—a union which although incomprehensible in its *mode*, is intelligible in its *use*—essential to all the offices of the Redeemer, and sustained with the even hand of omnipotence, through every stage of God's mighty scheme for the salvation of sinners?

Secondly, let us observe the *completeness* and *harmony* of this account of the Saviour. A multitude of distinct testimonies, given forth in different ages, relating to various points of the subject, and contributed, without any systematic arrangement, by a host of independent writers, are found to coincide with exact precision. Without difficulty they fall into admirable order, and produce a *whole* which men and angels shall never cease to contemplate with wonder, gratitude, and delight. The book which tells us of these things, and *so* tells us of them, must needs be the book of God.

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## SECTION VII.

ON THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT—  
ONE GOD.

WE have already dwelt on the attributes of God the Father, and on those of his only-

begotten Son, who is one with him. But the Scriptures make known to us a third divine Agent—the Holy Spirit of truth and righteousness—who illuminates, converts, and purifies the souls of men.

When our Saviour was about to quit this lower world, he commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations, “baptising them into the name<sup>1</sup> of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;”<sup>2</sup> from which expressions we learn that these servants of God were to baptize their converts into that faith, of which the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the inseparable objects. Now since it cannot for a moment be imagined that a mere attribute or influence could be presented to us, as a joint object of our faith with the Father and the Son, this passage must be regarded as containing a clear evidence of the personality of the Spirit.

The same doctrine appears to have been adverted to by our Saviour, when he spoke of the Holy Ghost as of one against whom it is unpardonable to blaspheme.<sup>3</sup> Again our Lord repeatedly describes him as the Comforter or *Paraclete*<sup>4</sup> of his people. “When the Comforter is come, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.”<sup>5</sup> It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Com-

<sup>1</sup> εἰς τὸ ὄνομα.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii, 31, 32.

<sup>4</sup> παράκλητος, means an advocate, defender, helper, and teacher, as well as comforter.

<sup>5</sup> John xiv, 26.

forter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you, and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."<sup>6</sup> In all these passages the Spirit is described under a personal title, and as exercising personal attributes. On the same principle, we find that it was the Holy Ghost to whom Ananias and Sapphira *lied*, and whom they conspired to *tempt*.<sup>7</sup> He it is who said, "Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them ;"<sup>8</sup> who *forbad* Paul to preach the word in Asia ;<sup>9</sup> to whom it *seemed good* not to burthen the Gentiles with Jewish ceremonies ;<sup>1</sup> who *divides to every man* spiritual gifts according to his *will* ;<sup>2</sup> whom we are commanded not to *grieve* ;<sup>3</sup> and to whom our bodies are to be consecrated as a living *temple*.<sup>4</sup>

While the Holy Ghost is thus represented to us in Scripture, under a personal character, the attributes ascribed to him, are plainly those of the Deity himself. God is a Spirit. Invisible and spiritual in his nature, he fills his own works ; he exercises over them an unseen and powerful influence ; he dwells and operates in the hearts of men. Nor can we deny the truth of the converse of such a proposition. The Spirit who fills the works of the Almighty, who exercises over them an unseen, yet powerful influence, who dwells and

<sup>6</sup> John xvi, 7, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Acts xiii, 2.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv, 28.

"                    30.

<sup>7</sup> Acts v, 3, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Acts xvi, 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii, 8—11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. vi, 19.

operates in the hearts of men, is GOD. "The LORD is that SPIRIT."

The union of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the work of *Creation*, is conspicuously marked in the book of Genesis as compared with the declarations of the New Testament. When God, the Father, spake and it was done—when he said, "Let there be light," and there was light—he created by his *Word*. And at the same time, "the *Spirit* of God moved on the face of the waters."<sup>6</sup> It was therefore in his true and appropriate character that Jehovah spake when he said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."<sup>7</sup> The same union in the work of *Redemption*, was memorably displayed, when the Spirit descended like a dove, and lighted on the head of Jesus; while the voice of the Father was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.<sup>8</sup> "The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST," said Paul, "and the love of God, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all, amen."<sup>9</sup>

There is no passage, however, which throws more light on this subject than the following: "Howbeit" (said Jesus) "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. iii, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. i, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. i, 26. Comp. Gen. iii, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. iii, 15—17.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. xiii, 14. Comp. Eph. iv, 4—6. 1 Cor. xii, 4—6.

speaking; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.”<sup>1</sup> Here the Spirit is spoken of as the guide and teacher of the Lord’s people, who applies to their understandings and hearts the doctrine of Christ—administers to them of his love and grace—and thus glorifies the Son, by whom he is commissioned. On the other hand, the mercies of the Son are identified with those of the Father, to whom he is himself subordinate, and from the boundless depths of whose compassion, springs the whole mighty system ordained for man’s salvation.

Behold then the goodly order of truth. The Son is *of* the Father—the only-begotten of God. The Holy Spirit is the Father’s<sup>2</sup> and the Son’s.<sup>3</sup> The Father *sends* the Son. The Father and the Son *send* the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Nor can it be denied that in the economy of grace and salvation, they have severally distinct offices which the sacred writers never confuse. The Father originates and elects. The Son mediates and atones. The Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies.

While however the Scriptures afford us abundant evidence that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God, and plainly indicate their order and their respective offices, there is nothing in the

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 14—15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii, 16.

<sup>3</sup>                     ).

<sup>4</sup> John xiv, 26. xv, 26.



sacred volume which in the least degree supports the notion that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are separate Deities. So blasphemous and absurd an opinion has probably never been entertained, even for a moment, by any serious reader of the Bible ; for it is abhorrent from the whole scope and meaning of the book. The sacred writers ascribe to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit respectively, the names and attributes of the *only true God*—the immutable Jehovah ; and at the same time, the doctrine that “ there is no other God but he,” is not only clearly declared, but is presumed and understood in every page and almost in every verse, of the sacred volume.

What then is the conclusion to which a comprehensive view of Scriptural truth inevitably leads ? It is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are essentially and eternally ONE.

The distinction to which the Scriptures bear testimony as subsisting in the Deity, is so far from undermining the doctrine of his oneness, that it imparts to that doctrine a fresh energy and a peculiar glory. Certain it is, that where the unity of God is admitted, and this distinction is nevertheless denied, as among the Mahometans and modern Jews, religion loses much of its practical influence and vital power. Yet while the Christian rejoices in the distinct characters and offices of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so graciously revealed to us for our instruction and edification, he probably never finds his soul

bowed down with so deep a reverence or filled with so pure a delight, as when he contemplates the Almighty, as an ineffable glory—an incommunicable name—an infinite and incomprehensible UNITY.

We must now apply these remarks to the argument before us. Were that union and distinction in the divine nature, which is so plainly declared in Scripture, contrary to reason—that is, *naturally impossible*—we should be driven to the conclusion, that the Bible is so far from being the book of God, that it can be ascribed only to ignorant and erring man. But God is an infinite and unsearchable Being, and the least degree of reflection may suffice to satisfy us that there is nothing which reason can disprove in the doctrine of Scripture, that in a certain respect he is THREE, and in another respect, ONE.

Yet that doctrine is *beyond* reason—far out of the reach of our intellectual powers; and this is the very ground on which we hail it as another internal evidence of the divine origin of the Holy Scripture. While it bears upon us with a native strength and harmony which plainly indicate its truth, and while, when rightly understood, it is found to be full of unutterable blessings for our fallen race, it relates to the unfathomable secrets of the divine nature, and could not possibly have been discovered by the unassisted discernment of man. To whom then can we ascribe the revelation of this doctrine, but to the Supreme Being himself?

It is not, however, to the fact of its revelation only, but also to the manner in which it is revealed, that we may safely make our appeal. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are presented to us in the Scriptures as severally God, and as the distinct objects of our faith ; and at the same time we are perpetually reminded by the sacred writers that God is ONE. Yet these writers offer no apology whatsoever for this apparent diversity of statement ; nor do they make the slightest attempt to explain the mode in which these truths consist. The most mysterious of all doctrines is revealed in their writings with a perfect simplicity ; and on the apparent presumption, that no doubts could be entertained, and no casuistry exercised, on the subject.

How different would have been the case, had the Scriptures been written by some of those theological speculators, who have since handled the same subject, in their own wisdom and strength. What scholastic refinements, what apologies for apparent difficulties, what nice distinctions, what extraordinary terms, would have been imposed on their readers!

In the Bible all is simple, powerful, and practical. While enough is hidden to humble us under a sense of our own ignorance, enough is revealed to direct our faith and to regulate our conduct ; and the very mode in which the light shines upon us, affords a substantial evidence that it is the light of heaven.

Thus various and satisfactory are the evidences which the Bible, *considered alone*, contains of its divine authority. Of the particular points which have now been offered to the attention of the reader, and which, after all, are only a selection of evidences, each may fairly be deemed conclusive independently of the others.

Let the inquirer after truth reflect on the general excellence of Scripture; on the moral and spiritual energy which pervades the book; on the concentrated wisdom of a multitude of its particular texts, on the vigour and usefulness of its larger parts, and on the harmony of the mighty whole; more especially, let him compare the types of the Old Testament with the great Antitype of the gospel; and let him observe the figurative application even of real characters and historical facts recorded in Scripture—all teeming with lessons of Christian doctrine and spiritual religion.

Or let him direct his attention to the agreement between many of the prophecies of Scripture, and the history contained in the same book, and particularly between the predictions respecting Christ, and the narratives of the four evangelists; and let him observe that while the prophecy and the history are precisely matched, the prophecy could not possibly have occasioned the history, or the history the prophecy.

Or let him examine the revelation made in Scripture, of the natural and moral attributes of God our Father; his spirituality, eternity,

omnipotence, wisdom, omniscience, and omnipresence; his holiness, justice, equity, long-suffering, goodness, and love—a revelation which throws into the shade all the speculations of philosophers respecting the nature of the Deity, and which irresistibly recommends itself, as of divine origin, to every candid and serious mind.

Or let him compare the attributes of God with his moral law as it is unfolded in the Bible; let him dwell on the harmony which subsists between them; let him mark the perfection of that law, and the peculiarity of some of its features; and especially let him observe the standard which it proclaims, and the motives which it calls into action.

Or let him observe the exact correspondence of the moral law in its full development, with the example of our Lord Jesus Christ; let him examine the proofs afforded by the gospels themselves that this example was real; and then let him meditate on the strength and beauty of its several parts, and on the originality and divine excellence of the whole.

Or let him contemplate the Saviour of mankind in that more extensive view which comprehends his whole nature, character, and history—his eternal preexistence, his creative power, his incarnation, his miracles, his atoning death, his resurrection, his ascension, his reign of glory, and his predicted return on the day of judgment. More especially let him reflect on that wondrous combination in

Christ of deity and humanity, which qualifies him for all his gracious offices, as a Mediator, a Priest, a King, a Judge, and a Redeemer.

Or, lastly, let him dwell on the personal attributes and gracious operations of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier; on the distinct character and offices of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, in the economy of grace and salvation; on their harmony of design and operation both in creation and in redemption; and above all, on their absolute, and unchangeable oneness in the glorious Godhead.

To whichever of these points in our argument, we direct our attention, we can scarcely fail to find in it (if our search be deliberate and sincere) something which will constrain the inference, that the Holy Scriptures were given by inspiration of God.

But the evidences of Christianity in general, and this branch of them in particular, are cumulative. While each article in the series of proofs has its own force, it adds to the cogency of all the others. This fact depends on a general principle, of the truth of which a slight degree of reflection will be sufficient to convince us. If a certain proposition is clearly supported by a single testimony, the proof is so far satisfactory; but when a second testimony is produced, we have not only the insulated force of each, but the correspondence between the two affords a distinct additional evidence that we are deceived by neither. Again, when a third testimony is added, the same effect is produced in a

still greater degree, and behold we have “a threefold cord not quickly broken!” The comparison is a just one; three threads have severally their own force, but when twisted together, they produce a cord, of which the strength is far superior to the mere sum of their original forces.

But in an argument like the present, where the series of proofs consists of *numerous* distinct particulars, every one of which possesses an inherent validity, the accumulated force of the whole, becomes irresistible. Although parts of the system of Christianity may still be left in obscurity, and lie beyond the reach of human explanation, this is a force of evidence which bears down every obstruction, and ought to dissipate every doubt. Nothing remains for us as reasonable men, but to admit the conclusion, that the religion of the Bible is the TRUTH OF GOD.

## PART II.

### THE BIBLE COMPARED WITH EXPERIENCE.

THE word *experience* must here be understood in a wide and general sense ; as comprehending the results not merely of self-knowledge, but of that acquaintance with mankind and with the order and constitution of nature, which we obtain from our own observation. In discussing the present subject, we shall make use, as occasion requires, of the following lines of reasoning, all of which depend on that primary truth, that there is one God, the Author of nature, and the Supreme Ruler of created things.

*First*—When the doctrines revealed to us in the Scriptures are analogous to the ordinary course of nature and Providence—similar in effect and identical in principle—this circumstance affords a satisfactory answer to all objections which can be urged against them ; because experience proves that the effects or principles objected to, (though the reasons for them may be hidden from us,) belong to God's *known* plan for the government of the world. But such a mode of reasoning not only enables us to parry objections ; it supplies us with positive evidence



of no inconsiderable importance, that the doctrines in question are true. Since God is one, and his universe an harmonious system, the fact that these doctrines are of the like kind and character with those things which are actually perceptible in His government, affords a strong presumption that the God of nature has ordained them—that they originate with Him alone. The more exact the analogy, and the more marked and peculiar the points of resemblance, the more conclusive this evidence becomes.

*Secondly*—When the declarations of the Bible respecting the character and condition of mankind, or any other points of a practical nature, are found to correspond with undoubted facts—when they fall in precisely with that which we feel in ourselves and observe in others—we, of course, draw the inference that the Scriptures are true. And when the truths which they thus communicate to us, although confirmed by experience, are such as man cannot discover in his own wisdom, and such as are utterly opposed to all his favourite systems—we further conclude that this unflattering intelligence is sent to us from that Being, who searches our hearts and knows all things as they are.

*Thirdly*—When we take a view of our weakness and sinfulness by nature, and contemplate Christianity as a scheme ordained for our recovery; and when we ascertain from experience that this scheme is precisely suitable to its purpose, and supplies our whole

spiritual need, we are furnished with unquestionable proof that it is the work of a *wise* and *merciful* Contriver. And further, when we consider the nature of this scheme—its complexity and unity, its wondrous originality, its universal applicability—we rest assured that its Contriver, is GOD.

In the following pages, these lines of reasoning are not always separately pursued; but the reader will have no difficulty in perceiving to which of them each successive argument properly belongs; and I trust it will be found, that they are susceptible of being blended without confusion.

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## SECTION I.

### ON A FUTURE LIFE.

THE declarations of Scripture respecting a future life admit, in one point of view, of no comparison with experience, because no man living has yet experienced that there is such a life; and supposing that there is one, no man can compare that new state of existence, with the account given of it in the Bible, who has not himself passed through the portals of the grave.

In another point of view, however, the doctrine of revealed religion, that man lives after death, may justly be said to accord with experience, because things which we see, and feel, and know, in this present world, lead

to the conclusion that this doctrine is true. That such is the fact will appear from a brief consideration of the following particulars.

I. Every man capable of reflection, is perfectly aware that he possesses not only a gross material body, but a mind which perceives, thinks, wills, and reasons; and although these two are brought into close union, and in various respects powerfully affect each other, he is also aware that they are distinguished by quite different capacities and functions. The body like all other *matter*, is tangible, extended, and divisible; and being organised with a perfect skill, it becomes a well-adapted machine for all the purposes of life. On the other hand, the mind, intangible and spiritual, sits at the helm as its supreme governor, and directs all its movements. It sees through the eye, hears through the ear, and handles through the touch. Closely, however, as it is connected with the body in the exercise of all these functions, it is allied with foreign matter, in a precisely similar manner, though in a different degree. A man sees with his eye as he sees with a telescope; both are mere instruments of vision.

But it is in the higher operations of the mind, that the distinctness of its character and functions from those of the body become most conspicuous. The faculties of reflection and abstract reasoning, and above all, the faculty of worship, must for ever distinguish the mind of man from the instinct of the inferior animals; and still more obviously from

all things merely material. These are functions which a man performs without any aid from his natural senses, and often when during the hour of silent meditation, the world within him is separated from all external objects. The mind can then roam over the universe at its pleasure; and when it rises in living aspirations towards the Maker and Ruler of that universe, it holds converse with God himself.

All inquiries into the nature and essence of mind—what it is, or of what it consists—are improper and absurd: because the question lies beyond our reach. It is not within the province of our faculties. Mind and matter are severally known only by their properties. By matter we mean, that which is tangible, extended, and divisible; by mind, that which perceives, reflects, wills, and reasons. These properties are wholly dissimilar and admit of no comparison. To pretend that mind is matter, is to propose a contradiction in terms, and is just as absurd as to pretend that matter is mind. Since, therefore, the thinking part within us, is plainly distinct in its nature and character from the gross body with which it is here connected, it is only reasonable to believe, that they are essentially independent, and that when the body perishes, or rather falls to pieces, (for in the course of nature, no particle of matter is ever destroyed,) the mind will survive the wreck.

II. This presumption is greatly strengthened by facts familiar to every observer, and

often brought home to the experience of individuals. A man may lose many parts of his body—the eye by which he sees, the tongue by which he tastes, the ear by which he hears, and the hand by which he handles—he may be deprived of all his organs of sense, and yet is the same man as he was before. The mind which is the man, continues unchanged and unimpaired. Chemistry, indeed, demonstrates that our bodies are in a state of perpetual flux, and that not a particle of the matter which once belonged to us, can now be called our own; yet we never lose our personal identity. We are still the same rational and responsible individuals, as ever.

These remarks apply to the brain, which is the receptacle of sensation—the connecting link between the senses and the mind—as well as to other parts of our mortal frame. It is a well known fact, that this organ is sometimes seriously injured and a large part of it actually removed, without any material interruption of the functions of the mind. Closely connected, therefore, as is this wondrous instrument with these functions, and in general essential to their exercise in our present state of being, it is no more to be confused or identified with the mind itself, than is any other part of the human body. Finally, it often happens, that when the body is desperately diseased and within a few moments of death, the mind remains unimpaired, and even shines forth with peculiar strength and

brightness; displaying its loftiest powers of reflection, hope, and adoration.

These and similar facts plainly indicate that as matter exists independently of mind, so mind may exist independently of matter; and they confirm the presumption, derived from the distinctness of their natures, that death cannot annihilate our rational faculty. Since experience proves that "all things continue as they are, except in those respects in which we have some reason to think they will be altered,"<sup>1</sup> it is plain that the doctrine of the soul's surviving the body *agrees with experience*. Who that reflects on the native powers of the living spirit within him can avoid acknowledging the propriety of that distinction on which our Saviour insisted; "Fear not them which kill the body, *but are not able to kill the soul*; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?"<sup>2</sup>

Here we may call to mind a lesson taught us by reason as well as by Scripture, that the Creator of heaven and earth, who pervades the universe which he has made, is himself an immaterial Being. Yet He is the Living One and the Fountain of all life; and in Him are centered, in infinite perfection, all the properties of a rational mind. When, therefore, he breathed into man a spark of his own intelligence—a soul capable of reflection and reason—we may fairly conclude that He bestowed upon him something which, like Himself,

<sup>1</sup> Butler's Analogy, chap. i, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x, 28.

exists independently of matter—something which, like Himself, can never die.

III. From the premises it may be inferred, that the only respect in which the soul of man is altered by the death of the body is this—that being freed from its mortal tenement, it is introduced to a higher and purer state of existence—a state of which, at present, we can form no conception. On this point again, the presumptions of reason are in accordance with revelation. “Verily I say unto thee,” said the dying Redeemer to the thief on the cross, “to day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;” that is, in the region of departed spirits—in a place of exaltation and felicity.<sup>3</sup>

Now such a change of condition as we have here supposed, is so far from being at variance with the visible order and constitution of the world, that it is precisely analogous to many things which we know to take place in nature; that is, under the perceptible government of God. The seed is sown in the earth, and falls to pieces in the ground; yet in due season it becomes “the full corn in the ear,” or the flower laden with blossoms, or even a tree so mighty, that the fowls of the heaven lodge in its branches.<sup>4</sup> A worm is changed to a

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiii, 42, 43.

<sup>4</sup> “All things,” says Bishop Pearson (after describing the change of seasons, and the annual revivals of nature), “are repaired by corrupting, are preserved by perishing, and revived by dying; and can we think that man, the lord of all these things which thus die and revive for him, should be so detained in death as never to live again? Is it imaginable that God should thus restore

chrysalis, and undergoes a sort of living death, until the appointed moment arrives for its breaking every bond, and spreading to the sun the painted wings of the butterfly.

But what change can be imagined more striking and complete than that which even here takes place in man himself? What difference, as to extent and variety of powers, can be conceived more remarkable, than that which subsists between the unborn babe, and man in all the maturity of his bodily and intellectual faculties? If, then, we are to judge from the analogy of nature, we must surely consider it credible and even probable (independently of other evidence), that the death of the body is a kind of second birth to the soul; an event which will usher the immortal part of man, with enlarged and still enlarging faculties, into a loftier state of being—into a new and more extended field of thought and action, of suffering or enjoyment.

IV. To these considerations must be added the general consent of mankind, in all ages, to the doctrine of a future life. The impression seems to be almost universal in the minds of men, that when the body ceases to exist, the indestructible spirit wings its way to unknown regions, either of bliss or woe. This is a belief which the idolatrous Hindoo, the polished Greek, the untutored American Indian, the Jew, the Mussulman, and the Christian, have been found to entertain in common;

all things to man, and not restore man to himself?"—  
*On the C*



and it may be questioned whether the most hardened of infidels ever succeeded in *fully* persuading himself that death would be his annihilation. The impious motto of the French revolutionists, "death is an eternal sleep," is opposed at once to the fair presumptions of reason, to the analogy of nature, and to a feeling deeply inherent in the mind of man; inherent, at least, wheresoever his rational faculties are *in any degree* developed.

I consider it to be matter of fact, confirmed by the experience of millions, that our spiritual part—that part which reasons, reflects, and communes with its Creator—shrinks from the notion that its existence will cease, clings to life, pants after immortality, and, as it were, *refuses to die*.

Now, whether we ascribe the concurrent feelings and opinions of mankind on this subject to original revelation, or to the light of reason, or to a sense of moral responsibility, or to the very constitution of our nature, or to all these causes combined, we cannot reasonably avoid the conclusion, that the foundation on which they rest is *truth*.

Since, then, we are sensible that matter and mind have distinct natures and properties; since their independence of each other is evinced by many notorious facts; since we know that many of God's creatures undergo vast changes, and rise step by step in the scale of being, without losing their identity; and since the general consent of mankind proclaims the reality of a life to come—we

may safely affirm that the doctrine of Scripture on this momentous subject, agrees with experience. It agrees with those conclusions of reason, which experience fully justifies and even constrains.

While, however, we rejoice in this harmony of evidence, we ought always to remember that the proper and sufficient proof of a future life is to be found in the Bible itself. Since the primary object of the Christian revelation is to declare the reality, and unfold the interests, of a world to come, all the evidences, whether historical, prophetical, or moral, which prove the truth of Christianity, bear with peculiar force on this essential point. It is the glorious distinction of the divine Founder of our religion that he "has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." It ought also to be observed, that while revealed religion agrees with the dictates of reason and nature respecting a future life, and, as it were, adopts them for companions *as far as they go*, it contains a further development of truth in reference to this subject, and on its own authority, declares some essential particulars which our natural faculties could never enable us to discover.

Although, in the first place, observation and experience afford us good reason to believe that the death of the body will not destroy the soul; yet it is impossible for us to judge from the mere light of nature, whether within the range of an unknown future, some other event may not occur by which the soul itself will be an-

nihilated. But revelation solves all doubts on the subject, and for ever fixes a negative on such a notion. The testimony of Scripture is express, that our future life will last for ever and ever. The worm prepared for the wicked is declared to be a deathless worm, and the pleasures reserved for the righteous to be endless pleasures.<sup>5</sup>

And secondly, while reason affords a strong presumption that the soul lives after death, it has little or no light to communicate respecting the resurrection of the body. But there is no point on which revelation more emphatically dwells than on the certain approach of a day, when *all that are in the graves* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth—when the dead shall be raised, and the living changed; when our mortal frame shall be proved to have been the seed of a spiritual body; when our soul shall be united to that body; and thus the whole law of death be finally and for ever abolished, through Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>6</sup>

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## SECTION II.

### ON THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

THE reality and eternal duration of life being allowed, it becomes of uni-

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxv, 46. Mark ix, 43, 44. (xvi, 11. Dan. xii, 3. John xi, 26., &c.

<sup>6</sup> John v, 28, 29. 1 Cor. xv, 35—57. Rev

importance, to ascertain by what means we may insure or promote its being a happy state of existence to ourselves.

Christianity teaches us that our condition hereafter, depends upon our conduct in the present life ; and that in a future and ever-enduring world, we shall all be rewarded or punished according to our works. Now in this general notion of the responsibility of man, and of the government of God by rewards and punishments, there is nothing which contradicts either reason or experience. On the contrary, we actually find ourselves placed under the same kind of government in this lower world. Our happiness here is in a great degree placed in our own power, and we are forewarned by nature that certain actions will procure us pleasure, and that others as surely will be productive of pain. Most of the enjoyments of life are bestowed upon us as an effect—that is as a *reward*—of some exertion on our parts, and much of the pain which we suffer, is the consequence of our own inadvertence ; it is a *punishment* which we bring upon ourselves. A man who thrusts his arm into the fire, is punished for his folly by the agony which he endures, and by the loss of his limb.

Experience moreover proves, that present pleasure can be safely pursued only within certain limits, and under proper regulation ; and watchfulness and self-denial are absolute essentials to our temporal prosperity. If our known future advantage to

nihilated. But revelation solves all doubts on the subject, and for ever fixes a negative on such a notion. The testimony of Scripture is express, that our future life will last for ever and ever. The worm prepared for the wicked is declared to be a deathless worm, and the pleasures reserved for the righteous to be endless pleasures.<sup>5</sup>

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## SECTION II.

### ON THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

THE reality and eternal duration of a future life being allowed, it becomes of unspeakable

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxv, 46. Mark ix, 43, 44. Comp. Psalms xvi, 11. Dan. xii, 3. John xi, 26., &c.

<sup>6</sup> John v, 28, 29. 1 Cor. xv, 35—57. Rev. xx, 11—15.

boundless future, he will reward the *good* with happiness, and punish the *wicked* with misery. And does this further development of the government of God over mankind also agree with experience? Is it rendered credible—is it confirmed to be probable and even true—by those things which we know in ourselves, and observe in the world around us? Does experience furnish us with any proofs that God, the rewarder and punisher of mankind, is on the side of *virtue*?

That these questions may be safely answered in the affirmative, will appear from the following considerations.

I. Every one knows that man is gifted (in distinction we may presume from all the inferior animals) not only with the powers of reason, but with the faculty of conscience, by which we judge of right and wrong in our own actions. We may safely aver, that there is no man living, whose intellectual powers are not entirely obscured, who is destitute of this faculty, and it seems probable, that the exercise of it is uniformly connected with a sense of the existence of some superior power, to whom we are responsible. The allusion made to this subject by the apostle Paul, corresponds with the results of observation: "When the Gentiles which have not the law (i. e. the written law), do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience* also bearing witness, and their

thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”<sup>7</sup>

The conscience is here justly described as bearing witness in the soul,—as declaring to a man whether the action which he has done or is about to do, is right or wrong. His thoughts accuse him on the one hand, and excuse him on the other, but it is his conscience which *decides* the question. Now the conscience, like all our other natural faculties, is liable to great abuse. It may be blinded by ignorance, hardened by sin, and perverted by a mistaken education; and hence its decisions may sometimes be scarcely perceptible, and at other times erroneous. But although the *eye* may be darkened, distorted, or even destroyed, the *light* is in its very nature unchangeable; and the “law written on the heart”—a “work,” as I have always believed, of the Holy Spirit—is a light communicated to the soul, by which the conscience is directed, and rectified.

Where the intellectual powers are but little unfolded, as among the more savage tribes of the heathen, this light does indeed appear to be extremely faint. It shines in darkness; and “the darkness” comprehends it not.<sup>8</sup> But although the superficial observer, who is probably unacquainted even with their language, may be unable to discover in men so untutored, any traces of the moral principle, there can be little question that it exists, and might presently be called into action, should their mental faculties become better cultivated.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. ii, 14, 15.

<sup>8</sup> See John i, 5.

Again, it may be remarked, that persons are sometimes led by a misapprehension of duty, not only to adopt practices which the law of God does not require, but even fearfully to break that law; as Saul did when, under the influence of "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge," he persecuted the unoffending Christians. But such facts afford no proof whatsoever—not even any fair presumption—that the law is not written on the hearts of all men. For although a man's conscience may be so perverted, that he will commit a bad action, under a notion that he is doing his duty, no example has ever been adduced of a man's conscientiously approving an action, because of its badness; for example, *because* it is treacherous, cruel, or unjust. It may be safely affirmed, that all men, every where, *approve* of truth, justice, and benevolence. There is a moral principle in every man's heart, which compels him to acknowledge that, abstractedly, these qualities are right and good. And what is this principle but the law of God made manifest in the soul?

It appears then, that what we know and feel of the constitution of our nature, and of the working of our own minds, affords an unquestionable evidence that our Creator is on the side of virtue, and that when the sacred writers call upon us to lead a life of holiness, integrity, and charity, their voice is in perfect unison with the voice of God, *heard in the secret heart.*



The more the conscience is enlightened by this inward monitor, the less it will respond to certain parts of the moral systems of the ancient heathen philosophers—those parts for example, which encourage the pride of man, and make allowance for ambition, suicide, and revenge; and the less it will sanction that false prophet Mahomet, in fanning the violent and voluptuous propensities of our nature; but between the law written on the heart, and the law written in Scripture, there is a perfect accordance. Not a single article can be found in the code of Christianity, to which the most enlightened conscience can refuse its assent. Yet while the inward and the outward law go hand in hand, justifying and confirming each other, it is always to be remembered, that Christianity develops our moral duties to a much greater extent, than does merely natural religion.

The Scriptures make known to us the attributes of Jehovah with a fulness and precision, to which our unassisted reason could never have attained, and with an equal completeness, they describe the behaviour towards Him, which those attributes demand. They reveal the new relations of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and insist on our corresponding duties; in short, (as we have already remarked,) they unfold the law of God in all its strength and spirituality—in all the glorious variety of its details.

Now I conceive that in the agreement between the law written on the heart, and the

law written in the book, and in the extension of the latter beyond the natural limits of the former, we have two cogent and distinct evidences, that the Scriptures are the book of God.

II. Furnished as we are by the Author of our being with a moral principle, it is impossible for us to conceive that God will reward and punish mankind in a future world, by any other than the moral rule. We should be utterly at a loss to account for the contrary, which would be directly opposed to that sense of right and wrong, which He has so graciously interwoven with our very nature. But that God, in the eternal future, will reward virtue with happiness, and punish vice with misery, may be safely inferred from the fact, that in various respects he does so now, in such a manner and degree as must lead us to expect the completion of this his righteous government, in the world to come.

In the first place, every one knows, that many breaches of the moral law are followed by punishment in the way of natural consequence. The liar finds his punishment in perplexity; the miser, in the terrors of apprehended poverty; the dissolute, in the wreck of his fortunes; the sensualist, in the debasement of his intellect; the drunkard, in the destruction of his health. Folly and imprudence also are closely connected with vice, and partake of its nature; and that they are punished with suffering and distress in the present life, is a fact which most men know

from their own experience. On the other hand, virtue and her sure allies wisdom and prudence, are undoubted promoters of sound health, mental tranquillity, and substantial prosperity; and these surely are no despicable rewards.

Secondly—that representative of God in our bosoms, *conscience*, is not only appointed to be the judge of our actions, but is charged even here, with the office of rewarding and punishing; and the more that faculty is brought under the influence of the Spirit of God, the more rapidly and vigorously it performs this office. He that is of a good conscience, like him that is “of a merry heart,” hath “a continual feast;”<sup>9</sup> and no man can deny the apostle’s doctrine, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, how painful, how tormenting, is the feeling of remorse—the intelligible, unwelcome, fore-runner of the worm which dieth not!

Thirdly—that very moral sense which leads men to condemn vice and to approve of virtue in themselves, compels them also to estimate others by the same rule; and since, for our happiness in this world, we depend, in a considerable degree, one upon another, the approbation of our fellow-men is no contemptible recompence of virtue, and their disapprobation no trifling punishment of vice. Who does not feel the worth of a good character? Who is not aware that it opens a door to

<sup>9</sup> Prov. xv, 15.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii, 21.

many of the most valuable enjoyments of the present state? On the contrary, who does not know that a bad character is an unceasing source of mortification and uneasiness?

Fourthly—the authority of parents over children, and the civil government of states are both natural; for such is the constitution of our nature, that they are necessary to our well-being in the world, and they clearly belong to the known order of God's providence. When therefore the child is punished by his parents because he has committed an action which disturbs the order of the family, and when the criminal is punished by the state, because he has been guilty of an offence which endangers the peace of society; these are instances, *as far as they go*, of the moral government of God. But when the child is punished—or punished the more severely—because his action is *vicious in itself*; and when, for the same reason, the offender against society (as it frequently happens), is prosecuted more readily, convicted more certainly, and visited with a heavier penalty, than he otherwise would have been—it is plain that we are then furnished with unquestionable examples of God's moral government. True indeed, it is, that in consequence of the corrupt and disordered state of mankind, actions are sometimes rewarded, although they are vicious, and punished, although they are virtuous. Yet actions are never rewarded as vicious, nor punished as virtuous. Although the rule of rewarding virtue *as such*, and of

punishing vice *as such*, may often be interrupted, it is never reversed.

When, therefore, we consider the effects produced by virtue and vice on our bodies, minds and circumstances; the pleasures bestowed, and the pains inflicted, by conscience; the approbation and contempt of our fellow-men; and the rewards and punishments of domestic and civil life—we cannot fail to perceive that the righteous, and the righteous only, are on the side of the divine administration. They are the friends of God—the heirs of his favour and protection. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the wicked are rebels against his government, and exposed to the vials of his wrath. Happiness is the *natural* consequence of virtue, and misery the *natural* consequence of vice; and we have reason to believe that the tendencies of virtue and vice to produce their own consequences, are *uniform* and *invariable*. Like the God of nature himself, by whom they have been fixed, they do not, cannot, change.

While these conclusions rest upon obvious grounds, we ought never to forget that our present state of being, is an imperfect one—that we are living in a degenerate and disordered world. Hence it follows that these settled tendencies of virtue and vice, though always the same, and always, as it were, *alive*, are exposed to innumerable obstructions, and are seldom carried into full effect. The pains naturally produced by vice are here often avoided; and the pleasures bestow-

ed by virtue, are mingled with many sorrows. The righteous are often afflicted, oppressed, and persecuted; the wicked often prosper, often triumph. But while the proper tendencies of virtue and vice may well be deemed unchangeable, the obstructions which are here permitted to oppose their effect, belong to the circumstances of this present world, and are in their nature temporal.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Those who are acquainted with the writings of Bishop Butler, will easily perceive that many of the sentiments contained in the present section are borrowed from his "Analogy." I would earnestly recommend this admirable work to the attentive perusal of every inquirer after truth. In the mean time I am happy, like other writers on Christian evidences, to avail myself of the resources of the bishop's great and truly original mind.

In his chapter on the moral government of God, Butler justly observes, that there is an essential tendency in virtue, to procure for its possessor, not only happiness, but influence and power. Even in the present disordered state of things, an individual who maintains integrity, self-denial, and charity, in his whole life and conversation, is sure to obtain considerable influence over others. He rules over them in the authority of virtue and love; and Butler has clearly shown that if a large body of people—a nation for example—were united in the practice of virtue—if all their private conduct, and all their public acts were ordered by these principles—they would obtain universal dominion. With a sway at once gentle and irresistible, they would rule over the world.

It is remarkable that in accordance with these sentiments, the Bible promises to the righteous, not only future happiness, but future *power*. In the world of spirits nothing will resist the paramount influence, the *natural omnipotence*, of virtue. "If we suffer with Christ," says the apostle, "we shall also *reign* with him."\*

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\* 2 Tim. ii, 12.

What then are the conclusions from these premises, which force themselves on the mind of every inquirer after truth, who takes into view the holiness and omnipotence of God? They appear to be as follows—that virtue, militant here, will be triumphant hereafter; that the first fruits of God's moral government which are now perceptible, are the sure tokens of the future perfection of the system; that in the world to come, all things which now appear to be morally uneven in the lot of mankind, will be balanced and rectified; and finally, that when all obstructions are removed, the essential tendencies of virtue to produce happiness, and of vice to produce misery, will operate in their full force, without interruption, and for ever. We have already considered the natural evidence of a future life. *This* is its moral proof, of which, the more we reflect on the subject, the more we shall feel the strength.

It now only remains for us to compare these results of experience and the reasoning to which they lead, with the declarations of Scripture. We open our Bibles and there we find the fulness of light on this, to us, the most

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.”† “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me, in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.”‡

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† Rev. ii, 26, 27. .

‡ Rev. iii, 21.

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important of subjects—our moral responsibility, our future destiny. The sacred volume declares, under multiplied forms, yet in the plainest terms, that God is the *moral* Governor of the world—that he abhors vice, and delights in virtue, rewards the righteous, and punishes the wicked.

Let the sinner tremble before the light of revelation, which fully detects him as the enemy of God. The Bible assures us that even here, “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest;”<sup>3</sup> that their momentary prosperity will but aggravate their future woe; and that finally, they will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”

Let the good man rejoice under the bright beams of “the Sun of Righteousness,” who has arisen upon him “with healing in his wings.” The Bible declares that he is the reconciled child of God—the object of his heavenly Father’s love; that even here, his portion, is “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;” and that his light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall only be the means of better fitting him for his eternal inheritance. In the world to come, he shall be made partaker of the fulness of joy; he shall shine “as the brightness of the firmament,” and “as the stars for ever and ever.”

To conclude, the light of Scripture respecting the moral government of God, and future

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lvii, 20.



rewards and punishments, as well as respecting the law itself, far exceeds the light of nature, both in clearness and extent. Yet with that fainter, narrower light, it is in just accordance—in perfect harmony. The analogy between the declarations of religion on these topics, and that which we see, and feel, and know, is palpable and undoubted. Well may we therefore conclude, that the objections which some men urge against the Christian doctrine of judgment to come, are founded on a fallacy. Well may we draw the inference that Christianity is indeed true, and that the God of nature, is the God of the Bible.

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### SECTION III.

#### ON THE SINFUL AND ENSLAVED CONDITION OF MAN.

MANY of the doctrines of revealed religion, although proposed to our faith on grounds satisfactory to reason, are far beyond the reach of our own powers either of reason or observation. But there is one truth discovered to us by Christianity which, now that we know it, is so palpable and obvious, that we can hardly imagine how great would have been our ignorance on the subject, did we not possess the Scriptures. The truth to which I allude, is the universal sinfulness of

mankind, and their consequent alienation from God.

That the conscience reproves for iniquity independently of the light of a written law, must indeed be fully allowed, and that mankind without Christianity are by no means destitute of a sense of transgression, may be inferred from the general use among the heathen, of expiatory sacrifices. But it is only through the medium of revealed religion, that we obtain a proper conception of the nature of sin, or are enabled to form a right estimate of the moral condition of mankind.

Although the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome, pleaded for virtue, their views of sin were miserably defective. Socrates, indeed, declared his opinion that certain vices—particularly injustice and ingratitude—were breaches of those “laws of the gods” which are known and understood by all men;<sup>5</sup> but with most of these uninspired reasoners, sin was nothing more than a “missing of the mark,” as it regards the good order of society, or the general *fitness* of things. Could the unassisted powers of human reason have sufficed for the purpose, these moralists, so gifted with talents, so cultivated by study, would surely have discerned the true character of sin; but they made no such discovery. Nor have those modern speculators been more successful, who dare to speak of sin, as if it were of small account—a casual and tempo-

<sup>5</sup> Xenoph. Memorab. lib. iv, 4.

rary evil, which will in the end be productive of greater good!

But what says the Bible on this subject? It says that sin is the transgression of the perfect law of a holy God—an offence against the moral Governor of the universe—which although varying in its *degrees*, is so malignant in its *nature*, that it separates us from his favour, and for ever exposes us to his wrath. “The law of the Lord is perfect,”<sup>6</sup> and “sin is the transgression of the law.”<sup>7</sup> “The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> “Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”<sup>9</sup>

Since Jehovah himself is the Being against whom all our sins are committed, their heinousness is greatly aggravated in our view, when we reflect on his glorious attributes. To offend against *omnipotence*, is desperate folly; against *perfect holiness*—desperate pollution; against *unutterable goodness*—desperate ingratitude.

Now it is in the Scriptures only that the attributes of our heavenly Father, are fully made known to us. And, therefore, it is only through the religion of the Bible, that we can obtain an adequate notion of sin. But the cardinal point revealed to us in Scripture, and *only* in Scripture, without a knowledge of which it is impossible for any man to form

<sup>6</sup> Ps. xix, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Prov. xv, 9.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John iii, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. ii, 8, 9.

a *full* estimate of sin, is this—that God *so* loved us as to send his only begotten Son *into* the world, to be a sacrifice for our *sins*. How infinitely deep and malignant in *the* sight of God—how strangely different from the weak idea of it embraced by ancient philosophy or modern deism—must be that evil, which demanded so exalted a sacrifice; which called Immanuel from his throne of glory to take our nature upon him, and to suffer and die for sinners!

In like manner it is evident that our apprehension of that by which the law is transgressed, must be in proportion to our acquaintance with the law itself. Now where but in the sacred writings, shall we look for a full account of the holiness and comprehensiveness of the law of God? Where, but in them, shall we learn the lesson of its variety and completeness; of its spiritual and searching nature; of its divine controul, not only over our words and actions, but over our thoughts, motives, and dispositions? A man who imbibes the scriptural account of God and of his law, and then examines his own conduct, will soon be driven from the strong holds of self-righteousness. He will be constrained to confess that he is a miserable sinner. His heartfelt cry will be like that of Job: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Job xlii, 5, 6.

Finally, since sin is of an extent precisely equal to that of the law—including the omission of duty as well as the commission of wrong, and especially that neglect of God, which so awfully pervades our fallen race—no man can fairly deny the doctrine of Scripture, that “the *whole world* lieth in wickedness.”<sup>2</sup> “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”<sup>3</sup> “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin, as it is written: there is none righteous, no **NOT ONE**; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, **NO NOT ONE**. . . . Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and **ALL THE WORLD** may become **GUILTY BEFORE GOD**.”<sup>4</sup>

All history, all experience, prove the correctness of this mournful picture. All men have sinned against the law of God, as it is written on their hearts; and those on whom the Scriptures are bestowed, have sinned against the same law, as it is more largely unfolded in the sacred volume. There are, however, two points connected with the subject, on which it may be desirable shortly to touch. It is, in the first place, a well known fact, that one man is tempted in one

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii, 9—19. Comp. Ps. xiv, 2, 3.

way, and another in another—that we all have our peculiarly *besetting* sins. Now Christianity teaches us that such is the essential unity of the law of God, that he who offends “in one point” is “guilty of all;”<sup>5</sup> that is, he stands condemned as a transgressor against the one great system of divine holiness. I apprehend that this doctrine agrees with the decisions of conscience. No man who is truly brought under conviction of sin, will refuse to acknowledge that he has transgressed the law of God considered as a *whole*, and is therefore liable to the fulness of the curse. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”<sup>6</sup>

And, secondly, although the restraints of education or of civil society, may protect many from those gross crimes of which others are guilty, yet experience and Scripture alike demonstrate, that the seeds of great offences are found in those bad dispositions to which all men are liable—the seed, in point of nature, being identical with the plant. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”<sup>7</sup> Hence we may learn that in order to form a just estimate of the character of man without grace, it is reasonable and even necessary, to look at those cases in which his iniquity is the most developed, and therefore the most glaring. In the horrors of the gambling-house; in the extremes of lascivious-

<sup>5</sup> James ii, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ezek. xviii, 4.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John iii, 15.

ness or treachery; in the wickedness of felons; in the merciless stroke of war; in the cruelties of the slave trade and slavery—we find ample proofs that (without the redeeming influence of religion) our *whole* species is corrupt and vicious.

Let us now apply these premises to our general argument. The Bible, which alone fully reveals the nature and character of sin, expressly declares that all men have sinned, and are guilty in the sight of God. Although it is chiefly from the light of Scripture that we obtain a knowledge of this doctrine, we are quite sure, now that we have obtained it, that the doctrine is true. It is proved to be so, by our observation of the world around us, and by a review of our own conduct. On this fundamental point, therefore, the declarations of Scripture agree with experience; *they are fully confirmed by unquestionable facts.*

But although the doctrine in question is now so clearly ascertained, it is one which men, in their own wisdom, appear to be utterly incapable of discovering; one also from which they turn away with an instinctive aversion, because it is totally subversive of the pride of the human heart. I conclude therefore that the book which pours forth a blaze of light on the subject, and, unwelcome as this truth may be, holds up a conviction of it as essential and fundamental in religion, cannot be a book of man's invention. It must surely have been given to us by

Him who knows all things, who searches the hearts of his children, and who mercifully detects the disease that he may apply the remedy.

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That all men have transgressed the law of God, and are sinners in his sight, is a *moral phenomenon* of immense importance, for which the uninspired wisdom of man is incapable of accounting. But the Scriptures state the original cause of this *phenomenon*; they also account for its continuance, in a manner so reasonable and so accordant with experience, as to win the assent of every candid mind.

It cannot be conceived that God, who is perfectly holy, created man *unholy*. Such an idea is directly opposed to the fair presumptions of reason, and to the dictates even of natural religion. It is in the Scriptures however, and in them only, that the contrary is expressly revealed; for at the close of the six days' work "God" (it is written) "saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was VERY GOOD."<sup>8</sup>

This description applied with peculiar force to man, whom God had created "in his own image," after his "likeness;"<sup>9</sup> that is, had endowed him with reason, power, virtue, and immortality. With regard to virtue in particular, Solomon declares that God made man "*upright*."<sup>1</sup> But although created virtuous, and

<sup>8</sup> Gen i, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. i, 26, 27.

<sup>1</sup> Ecc. vii, 29.



void of all defilement, our first parents were liable to temptation, and were made free to choose between good and evil; and no sooner had they been betrayed into an act of disobedience, that is, of *sin*, than the chain of love and union which had bound them to their Creator, was severed. Their original natural virtue was lost for ever; their bodies were condemned to death; and, morally, they were dead already, prone to wickedness, and destitute of any power of their own to perform a good action. Such is the condition of those persons who are “dead in trespasses and sins”—a condition common by nature to all mankind.

It is a proverb familiar to reason as well as to religion, that no man can bring “a clean thing out of an unclean,”<sup>2</sup> and the Scriptures teach us that the moral condition of Adam was transmitted to his descendants of all generations. “By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so *death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” “Through the offence of one many are *dead.*” —“By one man’s disobedience many were made *sinners.*”<sup>3</sup> It is evident that the *death* which is here described by the apostle as passing upon all men, in consequence of Adam’s transgression, is not merely the return of the body to the dust from which it came, but the alienation of the soul from God—a spiritual death—the total corruption of the human heart. For after confessing that in his *flesh*

<sup>2</sup> Job xiv, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v, 12, 15, 19.

(that is, in his fallen nature) there dwelt “no good thing,” he cries out, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”<sup>4</sup> Again he argues, that if “Christ died for all, then were all dead.”<sup>5</sup> Nor is it Paul alone who speaks of this spiritual death into which our whole species is fallen, for the same doctrine was familiar to the other apostles.<sup>6</sup> Our Saviour himself also speaks of mankind, as “lost,”<sup>7</sup> that is “perished,” and declares that those who hear his word are “passed from death unto life.”<sup>8</sup>

At other times the same moral state is described under the figure of mortal disease. “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (or diseased).”<sup>9</sup> “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”<sup>1</sup> Such was the mental condition of a people who were blessed, above all the nations of the earth, with the light of God’s countenance. And the same description applies to our fallen race in all ages, for “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that, they go to the dead.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vii, 18, 24. Comp. Rom. viii, 6.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v, 14. <sup>6</sup> See 1 John iii, 14; 1 Peter iv, 6.

<sup>7</sup> τὸ ἀπολωλός, Matt. xviii, 11.

<sup>8</sup> John v, 24, 25. <sup>9</sup> Jer. xvii, 9. <sup>1</sup> Isa. i, 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. ix, 3. Comp. Gen. vi, 5.

Now, as in the history of the fall of Adam, the Scriptures give a clear account of the first entrance of sin into the world; so in the doctrine that the *heart* of man is naturally corrupt, and dead to holiness—they afford us a satisfactory explanation of the tremendous fact, *that all men are sinners*. This is the true account, this the intelligible reason, of the universal ungodliness of our species; of the bloody and perfidious deeds which stain the pages of history; and of all those open and secret sins, which in various degrees, and under different forms, have polluted the life and conduct of every man living.

When Sir Isaac Newton had published his theory of attraction, and proved that it explained with nice precision, a variety of known phenomena—accounting equally for the apple's falling to the ground, and for the orderly courses of the planets—all men were constrained to acknowledge the correctness of his philosophy. The agreement between the principle which he advanced, and a number of acknowledged facts, afforded an unquestionable proof that his theory was true. In like manner when the Bible proposes the corruption of man as a principle; and when this principle is found to afford a satisfactory explanation of the appearances of sin, under every possible shape or combination, we are equally compelled to confess that the doctrine of Scripture is true; and as we trace Newton's discovery on a physical subject, to the unequalled powers of his reason,

so do we ascribe the discovery made to us in Scripture, on this moral and spiritual subject; to the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who alone searches the heart of man, and reveals its true condition.

Now that we are acquainted with Newton's theory of attraction, it appears so palpable, that we can scarcely account for its not having been before discerned; and now that we know the secret of human corruption, we are astonished that men should never have detected this obvious cause of their own transgressions. Yet, in reality, both these truths lay deeply hidden—the one from every superficial observer of nature; the other from all men, without revelation. And there is nothing by which the discovery in either case is rendered so admirable, as by its simplicity—the native force of truth with which it commends itself to every understanding.

But we have not yet stated the whole of our case; for as the wickedness of man is owing to the corruption of his heart, and his corruption to his fall—a chain, of which no man can deny the consistency—so his fall is traced in Scripture to the devices of a powerful and malicious being, the prince of fallen angels, the enemy of God and man, and the author of evil. It was the devil who tempted our first parents into sin, and no sooner had they sinned, than they became subject to his dominion. And such continues to be the wretched lot of their

degenerate descendants; they are under the rule of Satan; they are in bondage to the power of darkness. In their natural ignorance, and sinfulness, they are the willing subjects of "*the god of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*"<sup>3</sup> They walk "*according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*"<sup>4</sup> "Ye are of your father the devil," said Jesus to the unbelieving Jews, "and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."<sup>5</sup>

Nor is the power and work of the great adversary of souls restricted to unregenerate men. He is described as the tempter, tormentor, and unwearied foe, even of the children of God. "Be sober, be vigilant," said Peter to the "elect" though "scattered" church, "because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."<sup>6</sup> "Put on the whole armour of God," says another apostle to a community of Christian converts, "that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. ii, 1, 2.

<sup>5</sup> John viii, 44. Comp. Matt. xiii, 38, 39. 1 John iii, 8, 10.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. v, 8. Comp. i, 1, 2.

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and became not only wicked himself, but the author of evil in this lower world, the Scriptures do not reveal; and it were worse than idle for us to conjecture. Neither is it possible for us to fathom the purposes for which God has seen meet to permit this worst of enemies to prevail for a season over men, and to bring them under bondage to sin. For our present argument it suffices, that the doctrines of the Bible on these mournful topics—doctrines which that book alone has fully unfolded to mankind—agree with *experience*, and are confirmed by *fact*.

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### SECTION IV.

#### ON REPENTANCE AND MEDIATION.

THE sentiments which men entertain on the subject of repentance are ever found to be deep and extensive, exactly in proportion to the depth and extent of their views of sin; just as our estimate of recovery from a disease, is commensurate with our notion of the virulence and danger of the disease itself. Certain it is, however, that as the Scriptures alone reveal the true character of sin and the universal sinfulness of mankind, so it is only in the Bible, that we find an adequate account of the nature and use of repentance, and a call to repent, extended, without exception, to the whole human race. “Those eighteen upon whom

the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but *except ye repent*, ye shall all likewise perish."<sup>4</sup> God "commandeth all men every where to repent."<sup>5</sup> "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>6</sup>

Repentance, according to the account given of it in Scripture, consists of two parts which though distinct are indissolubly connected—sorrow for past sin, and such a change of mind, as leads to newness of life. And on both these do the sacred writers insist, as essential to the Christian character and acceptable to God our father. "Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness; humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up."<sup>7</sup> "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."<sup>8</sup> What could be more gracious than the following exhortation and promise addressed to a corrupt and rebellious people?—"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to

<sup>4</sup> Luke xiii, 4, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xvii, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. iii, 2.

<sup>7</sup> James iv, 8—10.

<sup>8</sup> Isa. lvii, 15.

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do well, &c. . . . Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."<sup>9</sup>

The passages which have now been selected and which are sufficient to serve the purpose of examples, are few from among a multitude; for the whole tenor of Scripture—the united voice of prophets, apostles, and our Lord himself—calls on a guilty and degenerate world to repent of transgression and return to God. No man, therefore, who imbibes the spirit of Christianity can refuse to allow that repentance is good in itself; that it is well pleasing to our Heavenly Father and that it forms an *indispensable* link in the chain which alone can terminate in the salvation of man. These are points, on which those who appeal to the Scriptures as the test of their opinions, are generally found to agree and certainly there are no persons who more warmly insist upon them, than those who entertain orthodox views of evangelical religion.

But the question for our consideration is this—Would repentance be of any avail for our reconciliation to God, and for our eternal salvation, without a Mediator? This question our Lord has most impressively answered the negative—"I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."<sup>1</sup> No wonder then, that he calls upon a sinful generation, not only to repent

<sup>9</sup> Isa. i, 16—18.

<sup>1</sup> John xiv, 6.



but to "believe the gospel."<sup>2</sup> No wonder that Paul also, both in his public and private ministry, and to Jews as well as Greeks, testified at once "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

But the Scriptures go further. While they class repentance towards God, and faith in the Mediator *together*, and uphold them to our view as inseparable in the work of salvation, they clearly show that the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, is the *sole* procuring cause of our redemption here, and of our eternal happiness hereafter. Contrition for past sin, a change of heart, amendment of life, and even faith itself which lies at the root of them, are severally the *effects* of the grace of God, and are necessary to our present and eternal welfare; but the cause of that welfare—the fountain of all our hopes—is the love of our Heavenly Father, flowing through a crucified Redeemer. "God was in *Christ* reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them."<sup>4</sup> "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."<sup>5</sup>

The notion that repentance has any inherent efficacy by which it procures the forgiveness of sin, and the salvation of the sinner, is opposed to the whole *scope* of Scripture. The Bible declares that "he who committeth sin is of the devil;" and that in order to escape from its penal consequences,

<sup>2</sup> Mark i, 15.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx, 21.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John v, 11.

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we must place our reliance not on any work of ours, or on any condition of our minds, but solely on the Mediator, whom God in his free mercy has appointed to "destroy the works of the devil."<sup>6</sup>

The promise of this deliverer was made to our first parents almost immediately after their fall; "The seed of the woman" said Jehovah to the serpent, "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."<sup>7</sup> Here it is obscurely indicated, that the Messiah was to be incarnate, to suffer, and to conquer—points which are severally developed in the series of prophecies by which this original promise was succeeded. In these, the Messiah is held out to view in the character of a Saviour, divine and yet human in his nature, who should *mediate* between God and his people—a mighty Prince, to be born of the seed of David, who should undergo great affliction, and in whom the righteousness of God for the salvation of the world, should be fully manifested.

His *vicarious sufferings* more especially, are described by the prophet Isaiah with the utmost precision. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned

<sup>6</sup> 1 John iii, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. iii, 15.

every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, (or, as in Lowth's version, "It was exacted, and he was made answerable,") yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."<sup>8</sup>

While such was the language of prophecy, that of *type* was almost equally intelligible. The sacrifice of animals even before the flood, when, probably, no use was made of them for food;<sup>9</sup> the burnt offerings made by Noah, Abraham, and Job; the intended sacrifice of Isaac, who was Abraham's only son by Sarah and heir of the promise; the lamb of the passover; the lamb of the daily burnt-offering; the bullock and the goat slain for the sins of the people on the day of atonement; the ratification of the covenant with the blood of peace-offerings sprinkled both on the book and on all the people—these and many similar rites, when viewed under the light of the gospel, admit of a clear explanation. In the first place they were plain indications of the *principle* that repentance has no natural or inherent efficacy to procure forgiveness, and that "without shedding of blood is no remission."<sup>1</sup> And secondly, they were the expressive shadows of the Mediator to come,

<sup>8</sup> Isa. liii, 4—7.

<sup>9</sup> It appears that permission to eat animal food was not given to man until after the flood.—See Gen. ix, 3. Comp. i, 29.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix, 22.

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who was to make an atonement for the sins of mankind—whose blood was to cleanse from *all sin*.

In his personal appearances to the patriarchs as the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God bore the character of a Mediator—one who in his gracious dealings with his people, acted on behalf of God even the Father. But when he became incarnate and was about to commence his ministry, he was introduced by his forerunner to the attention of the people, under the peculiar notion, that he was to make an atonement for sin. "Behold the LAMB OF GOD who taketh away the sin of the world!"<sup>2</sup>

Among the many truths which the New Testament declares, *this* is ever upheld as primary and fundamental, and is wrought into the whole substance of the volume. While the fact of his crucifixion is detailed with great force and exactness by all the four evangelists, the conversations of our Saviour, and the apostolic epistles, contain evidences at once luminous and abundant, that his death was propitiatory—that "he suffered, the *just* for the *unjust* that he might bring us to God."

But although the atonement made by the Son of God on the cross is the centre of our subject, it is not his only act of mediation, under the dispensation of the gospel. He mediates between God and man, in all his offices—as our Prophet by whom the truth was revealed to us, and who still teaches

<sup>2</sup> John i, 29.

us by his Spirit; as our High Priest, who pleads our cause, bestows on us his daily blessing, and ever lives to make intercession for us; as our Sovereign, who is head over all things to his church; as our Judge to whom we must render the account of our stewardship, and who will finally bestow on his children the gift of everlasting life.

Having thus briefly stated the scriptural doctrines of repentance and mediation, we have now to show that these doctrines agree with experience, and recommend themselves to every candid mind, as reasonable and true.<sup>3</sup>

I. Nothing can more readily approve itself to our reason, than the testimony of Scripture respecting the acceptableness and necessity of repentance. The sorrow of a child because of transgression against his father, is well-pleasing to the parent as an evidence of *sincerity*, as an effect of *love*, and as a pledge of *improvement*. What then can be more reasonable than the Christian's belief that the penitence of a sinner is approved by our Heavenly Father, and excites the joy of the angels in heaven?<sup>4</sup>

Again, if we reflect on our sinful condition by nature, and admit that the heavenly state is one of perfect purity—a state which, in the very nature of things, can be enjoyed only by the righteous—we cannot deny that a

<sup>3</sup> On the subject of the following argument, see Butler's Analogy, Part ii. ch. v.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xv, 10.

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change of mind and (where life is prolonged) an amendment of conduct, must be indispensable to our future happiness.

But salutary and necessary as repentance is proved to be, there is much in the known course of Providence, which plainly denotes, that it is not *in itself* sufficient to remove the guilt of sin, or to deliver us from its consequences. The fortunes of the spendthrift are ruined. He bitterly regrets his folly and adopts the habits of sobriety and economy. It is most probable, nevertheless, that the ease and comfort of his former condition will never be restored to him. The intemperate man who is hurried by his passions into the excess of personal indulgence, destroys his constitution. He repents and amends, but the deepest penitence, even when accompanied by abstinence from his former habits, will fail to renew his emaciated frame. The criminal who has long persevered in breaking the laws of his country, is arraigned at the bar of justice, and is condemned to imprisonment or death. He repents with all sincerity; but his repentance has no effect in opening the prison-door, or in staying the hand of the executioner.

It is utterly in vain, therefore, to object against Christianity, that it represents repentance as insufficient of itself to save us from the punishment of our sins; for the same objection would bear with equal force, against that which is already visible in the government of God over mankind. On the

other hand, from an actual knowledge of these analogous cases, and a thousand others of similar character, we conclude that this scriptural view of repentance is both reasonable and true.

If we allow the perfect holiness of God, it is impossible for us to suppose, that a life of which the former part has been vicious, and the latter part virtuous, can be the same in his sight, as a life spent in virtue from beginning to end. But here again we may appeal to experience. The sinner returns with the sacrifice of a broken heart to an offended Deity. Under these circumstances does conscience forego her office of condemning and punishing? Does remorse, the scourge which this just judge employs, abate its force and subside into nothing? So far otherwise, that the deeper the repentance, the more appalling becomes the recollection of past transgression—the more intolerable the pain which that recollection occasions. Absolutely *necessary* as is the penitence of such an offender—approved of God and rejoiced in by angels—it affords no peace to the offender himself. On the contrary it breaks up his former tranquillity, nor can he again find repose, except in the *mercy* of God—that mercy which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. That *mediation* in the most general sense of the term is natural, no observer of nature can for a moment deny; for a large proportion of the comforts which we enjoy in life, and our very existence itself, are bestowed

upon us through the intervention of others. To what a number of *middle agents*—each performing his own office in the economy of Providence—are we all indebted for our food, our raiment, our habitations, our social pleasures, our mental cultivation, our intellectual habits!

But to consider the subject in the more restricted scriptural view of our being saved from the punishment of sin, through the intervention of a Mediator—who does not know that *such* a mediation consists with the visible order of God's government, or in other words, *agrees with experience?*

Although the ruined spendthrift, the decrepid sensualist, and the condemned criminal may be destitute of all power to assist themselves, *yet if their excesses have not gone beyond a certain point*, a brother, a physician, an intercessor, will often succeed in delivering them from the effects of their transgressions.

The world abounds with poverty, misery, and sorrow, and these are often the natural consequences of our own misconduct. It also contains many *remedies* for them, which for the most part, are applied to their purpose through the agency of others; and which are so many examples not merely of goodness, but of *mercy*, in the known government of God. Now the punishments of a future state  
 m                    v follow sin, in the way of natura  
 c                    and the prevention of them.  
 :                    ediation of Christ, is an infi-



nately higher, and yet a *precisely analogous*, example of the same divine mercy. Who then shall pretend that such a doctrine is strange or unnatural?

But the *innocent* Jesus, it is objected, is represented as suffering in behalf of *guilty* sinners, and even in their stead. Such undoubtedly is the doctrine of Scripture, and to object to it, as if *we* were able to penetrate the counsels of an inscrutable Being, is a great absurdity. But how doubly absurd does such an objection become, when we look into the world around us, and perceive on every side innumerable instances of the innocent suffering for the guilty!

For example—A son, although carefully educated, yields to his evil propensities, and pursues a course of dissipation. For a long time he may himself escape without punishment, but his parents mourn on his behalf, and mourn *in his stead*. Every act of vice or folly which he is known to commit, inflicts a fresh wound on the hearts of those who are guiltless of his offences; and the more they regard the law of righteousness, the more deeply they suffer. Or, on the other hand, a parent neglects his business, and falls into intemperance; and what in consequence is the lot of his innocent offspring? They are deprived of a good education, reduced to poverty, and exposed to innumerable sorrows. In a temporal point of view, the sins of the father are visited on his children even to the “third or fourth generation.”

Almost all the crimes which men *commit* and even their minor faults are the occasion, in various degrees, of misery or uneasiness to those who are no sharers in their guilt. More particularly, when we interfere on behalf of others, in order to prevent or remedy the afflictions in which they are involved by their own vice or folly, we seldom succeed in our object, except at the cost of much labour and anxiety, and often of loss and injury, to ourselves. In all such cases the pains which we endure are, strictly speaking, *vicarious*.

It is clear then that the suffering of the innocent for the guilty is permitted under the government of God; and there can be no doubt that it is often *ordained* for the most beneficial purposes. Nor will any one who has a just sense of his own ignorance, and of the secrecy of the divine counsels, object to this providential appointment, even though the suffering in question be directly opposed (as is often the case) to the will of him who bears it.

But the apparent difficulty is considerably lessened, when the pains which men endure for the sake of others are voluntary. What sceptical mind is offended by the labours and difficulties which men so often undergo to serve a brother or a friend; or by the self-devotion of the sisters of charity to the painful duties of the hospital; or by the perils which a Howard braves in visiting infected prisons; or by the banishment and privations which a

Schwartz or a Brainerd endures, in order to preach the gospel to the heathen?

Now when the Lord Jesus, during his sojourn on earth, submitted himself to a life of hardship and poverty—when he carried the sorrows and bare the sicknesses of the people—his sufferings on behalf of man, were purely voluntary—the effect of native and free benevolence. And the Scriptures declare, that the same principle applies to his *whole* course of humiliation and suffering. Not only was it in obedience to the Father's will, but in perfect union of design with the Father, and in his own voluntary redeeming love, that he descended from the height of his glory, "took upon him the form of a servant," and "humbled himself unto death—even the death of the cross." "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it."<sup>5</sup> "Through the eternal spirit" he "offered himself without spot to God;"<sup>6</sup> and he condescended to illustrate this act of mercy by an allusion to human friendship. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."<sup>7</sup>

Thus then it is evident that the Scripture doctrine of *mediation*, both in its more general bearing, and in the peculiar view of the propitiatory sufferings of Christ, although far above the scope of human invention, is consistent with reason and agrees with experience.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. v, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. ix, 14.

<sup>7</sup> John xv, 13. Comp. Rom. v, 6—8.

In order, however, that we may apprehend with greater precision the reasonableness of this doctrine, it is necessary for us to advert more particularly to two of its features.

1. Were a mediator required to act on behalf of some miserable criminal in order to rescue him from impending punishment, would be a vast advantage if one could be found, who had a full understanding of the criminal's case and abundant opportunity of sympathising with his sufferings, yet was a person of commanding influence whose natural situation would enable him to deal on equal terms with the offended party, with the supreme governor of the country. Should it be possible to obtain such a mediator, he would be selected by every person of reflection, in preference to any other who had either less knowledge of the criminal's sufferings, or less authority in dealing with the sovereign. How much more then is the wisdom and mercy of that dispensation, under which we are provided with a Mediator, who in his human character (though sinless) "was in all points tempted like as we are," and is, therefore, "touched with feeling of our infirmities;"<sup>8</sup> and yet, being one with the Father in the Godhead;<sup>9</sup> as with him in dignity and power. "Father said Jesus, "I WILL that they also which thou hast given me be with me where I am. We are worms of the earth—finite, we degraded, and exposed to suffering; Go

<sup>8</sup> Heb. iv, 15.

<sup>9</sup> John xvii, 24.

supreme, and infinitely powerful and holy. Behold in Christ the all-availing Mediator—the “Daysman betwixt us”—who “can lay his hand upon us both!”<sup>1</sup>

2. In contemplating the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, we ought never to lose sight of its purpose, as declared by the apostle Paul—that God “might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> There is nothing in Scripture which in the least degree supports the notion that our Heavenly Father is naturally implacable, and that his wrath was appeased by the sacrifice of an innocent victim. While the prevalence of bloody sacrifices among heathen nations in all ages of the world, plainly indicates the feeling that without an atonement there is no forgiveness of sin, and while it affords an evidence of some original revelation on the subject, the vulgar notion that a wrathful Deity is by this method *rendered placable*, receives no countenance from Christianity. In the Bible, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is represented as the means, appointed of the Father in perfect wisdom and love, whereby he might freely justify the sinner, and at the same time preserve inviolate the holiness of his own character, and the claims of his moral law.

Ceremonial sacrifice, as it was instituted on divine authority, was a *display*, and on the part of the offerer, an *acknowledgment* of the desert of sin. It was an intelligible sign

<sup>1</sup> Job ix, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii, 26.

that the proper penalty of sin is death, and thus became an act of homage to the purity of the law and to the authority of God the lawgiver. On precisely the same principle, the sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God, was a public recognition of the most elevated and glorious kind, that sin is unalterably offensive in the sight of God. Nor is it possible to conceive an event by which this truth could have been so clearly manifested, or so efficaciously impressed on his rational creation.

At the same time it was an infinitely exalted example, and therefore proof, of the unmerited love and mercy of God towards a sinful world—an act of grace, which places the whole of our fallen race under unutterable obligations to our redeeming God and Saviour.

Now I conceive that this matchless display of holiness and love in indissoluble union, fully accords with our most enlightened notions of the divine attributes; that it agrees with all that we here know of the justice of God on the one hand, and of his mercy on the other; that in the highest sense of the term, it is *reasonable*; and that as such, it must for ever claim the admiration, and call forth the praises, of God's intelligent creation.

## SECTION V.

## ON THE FITNESS OF THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION.

WHEN we speak of the fitness of the scheme of redemption, that is, of its suitability to its proposed ends, we must always recollect that the ultimate design of every dispensation of Providence, is the glory of God; and it is clearly the highest point in the character of regenerate men, that they are taught of the Spirit to co-operate in this design.

Such persons will be prepared to acknowledge that in that manifestation of holiness and love conjointly, which distinguishes the scheme of redemption, there is a direct and perfect fitness to the end of God's glory. For we cannot conceive a method by which He could be more certainly glorified, than by so peculiar and distinct a display of his attributes.

Nor can we doubt that this display is intended for the instruction, not merely of mankind, but of other orders of beings, endued with a rational and moral nature. Reason suggests this doctrine as highly probable; and Scripture declares that one intent of the Christian dispensation, was that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." <sup>3</sup> On the same ground the

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii, 10. ἡ πολυπλοκὴ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ.

doctrines of Christianity are described by the apostle Peter as "things which the angels desire to look into"<sup>4</sup>—expressions which evidently convey the idea that the glory of these things does not lie merely on the surface—that there is a depth in them, not easily inspected or fathomed, into which even the angels delight to inquire.

But the glory of God is insured through the Christian dispensation, not merely by a display of his moral attributes to the universe, but by the actual effects produced, through this dispensation, in the good and happiness of his creatures. That these effects are great and numerous, far beyond our powers of examination or conception, we may readily suppose; and that such is the fact the apostle plainly indicates, when he speaks of God's good pleasure "which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one ALL THINGS in Christ, both which are IN HEAVEN, and which are ON EARTH, even in him."<sup>5</sup>

These remarks may serve to shew the extreme futility of the objections advanced against Christianity on the ground that our world is too insignificant a part of the creation to be the object of redemption through the incarnation and sacrifice of God's own Son. For although this globe was selected as the scene of the event, the purposes to which the dispensation is directed

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. i, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. i, 9, 10.



are probably co-extensive with the universe itself; and to all these purposes it may be *peculiarly* and perfectly adapted.

Did we however suppose that the inhabitants of this world were the sole objects of this mysterious display of holiness and mercy, the word *eternity* would remove every difficulty; for what purpose can be conceived more worthy of God, and of the infinite resources of his love, than the salvation of myriads of beings, of whose existence, as of his own, there will be no end? The globe which we inhabit may indeed be but a point in God's universe, and its countless inhabitants almost nothing among the hosts of his intelligent creatures; but who that regards the analogy of nature, will object on that account to the scheme of Christianity? Does it not seem as if the complete power of deity were expended on an insect, a feather, or a leaf? And is there not in the smallest parts of the creation, as well as in the stupendous whole, a hidden infinite which no man can search?

It appears then that independently of all unknown purposes, extending, as they may well be supposed to do, far beyond the limits of our globe, the salvation of sinful man is in itself an end (subservient to God's glory) which fully justifies the grand peculiarities of the gospel. It remains for us therefore to shew that to this its professed end, the plan of redemption is exactly suited—that in it there is an adequate supply of all our spiritual

need—that in Christ “*all fulness*” dwells for our restoration and salvation.

I. Man by nature is the child of ignorance. He may indeed put forth his powers of observation and reason, and obtain much knowledge on worldly and physical subjects; but respecting divine and spiritual things, he is in utter darkness, surrounded by a shade too deep to be pierced by any beam of his own intelligence. It is true that God has endued him with a moral nature; and that in the midst of his ruin by the fall, he is visited with a ray of heavenly light independently of any outward revelation. There can be little doubt that this blessing, like all other spiritual good, is bestowed upon him through the medium of a crucified Redeemer. But in considering the fitness of the scheme of redemption, we must look to its operation, where it is actually made known; for the outward revelation of truth clearly forms a part of the scheme itself. Now it is in *revealed religion*, and there only, that blind and erring man receives an illumination exactly proportioned to the depth and completeness of his ignorance.

There, he obtains sufficient information on the nature and attributes of God, on the demands of the law, and on his own character and condition, his moral responsibility, and future prospects. There, he is taught the lesson of the immortality of the soul, of the resurrection of the body, and of judgment to come. There, he is made acquainted with the

Saviour through whom he is reconciled to God, and with the Spirit by whom he is converted and sanctified. Well might Jesus say (in his peculiar character of a Revealer of Truth); "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>6</sup> Well might the apostle Peter call on the early Christian believers to "shew forth the praises of him" who had "called" them "out of darkness into his marvellous light."<sup>7</sup>

But the adaptation of this part of the scheme of redemption to the need of man, is apparent, not only from the completeness of the light bestowed, but from the limits by which it is bounded. While the gospel makes known to us every thing which we can conceive to be required for the purpose of influencing our hearts and directing our practice, it never goes out of its way, as false systems of religion do, to indulge our curiosity, or to please the speculative mind. Momentous facts are revealed to us which bear with irresistible force on our affections, and therefore on our practice; but the mode of these facts—a matter with which we have no concern—is hidden from our view. It is the unchanging principle of divine revelation, that "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> John viii, 12. Comp. Luke i, 77—79.  
<sup>7</sup> 1 Pet. ii, 9. <sup>8</sup> Deut. xix, 29.

II. But it is not enough for blind and erring man, that a clear revelation is made to him, of the "truth as it is in Jesus." His ignorance of the things of God is moral as well as intellectual, and his mental vision must be purified before he can entertain a just view of himself, his God, and his Redeemer. Experience affords abundant proofs of the truth of the principle so clearly laid down by the apostle Paul—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."<sup>9</sup>

The undeniable fact is, that we are by nature not only ignorant, but alienated from God—barren, hard, unprofitable, corrupt. No man, therefore, can be a partaker in any of the spiritual and saving blessings of the gospel, without *regeneration*. In the scheme of redemption, this is an article of primary importance; because upon it all the remaining provisions of that scheme (as it regards ourselves) entirely depend. The spiritual, like the natural life, must have its beginning, and regeneration is just as necessary to the former, as birth is to the latter. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!"<sup>1</sup>

That this new birth—this vital change in the spirit of a man—cannot be produced by any strength or wisdom of our own, is a truth declared in Scripture, and one which

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. ii, 14.

<sup>1</sup> John iii, 3.

the most extensive observation will never fail to confirm. Regeneration is the work of omnipotence, and, in the economy of grace, it is specially ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Every true convert is “born of God”<sup>2</sup> — “born of THE SPIRIT.”<sup>3</sup>

The influence by which this change is effected is compared by our Saviour, to the wind which “bloweth where it listeth.” We must not, therefore, pretend to define the time, the circumstances, or the methods, which God may be pleased to bless to this mighty end. Nevertheless, the instrument which, according to the experience of believers, is usually employed for the purpose, is *the gospel of our Redeemer*. Christians are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible (that is of the Spirit)—by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” “And this is the word,” adds the apostle, “which *by the gospel* is preached unto you.”<sup>4</sup> “Of his own will, begat he us *with the word of truth*.”<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, takes of the doctrine of Christ, and reveals it to our souls. By renewing us in the “spirit of our mind,” he rectifies our depraved intellectual faculties, and enables us to comprehend and imbibe the gospel; again, through the medium of the understanding, he impresses its contents on the heart. Thus he imparts to us a new life,

<sup>2</sup> John i, 13.

<sup>3</sup> John iii, 5.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. i, 23, 25.

<sup>5</sup> James i, 18.

humbles us under a sense of sin, and *turns* us to our Saviour and our God.

III. Man by nature is the child of wrath, labouring under the curse of the law—the awful sentence of eternal death. What then can be conceived more adapted to his need than *justification*—a plenary remission of all his sins through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and a free acceptance of him as righteous, for the sake of a righteous Saviour?

Here he finds reconciliation with a God of justice, deliverance from condemnation and eternal punishment, and a well founded hope of immortal bliss. The utmost claims of the law are satisfied; the holiness of the Creator is more than ever manifested; and the broken-hearted sinner reposes, in peace, on the bosom of infinite mercy. In himself indeed, as a transgressor from his birth, he is vile and polluted, but by the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his heart, his conscience is purged from every dead work; and having obtained an interest in the Saviour of men, he wears a robe of righteousness in which there is no spot. God accepts him in the Beloved; and adopts him as a child of grace, and as an heir of glory.

Such is the view presented to us in the Scriptures of the justification of the sinner, and nothing short of faith in this free gift of mercy, can impart to the awakened mind, substantial peace either in living or in dying. To advert more particularly to peace in death—how tremendous must it be, to meet the

king of terrors, and to plunge into the fathomless abyss of eternity, without a Saviour !

Many who have despised Christianity and rejected its warnings during the day of their probation, have found the near approach of death unspeakably terrible. Yet the philosophical unbeliever is sometimes known to put off mortality with cold sedateness, and the wicked have often "*no bands* in their death;" they meet their "last end" like the beasts that perish.

The *false rest* of the philosopher, in such a case, may be traced, to the hardness of unbelief; while that of the wicked is the obvious consequence of a seared conscience. But let a man be convinced of the holiness of God, of his own sinfulness and corruption, and of the infinite terribleness of the curse of the law—let him view his condition and danger as they really are—and he will enjoy no tranquillity in death, except from a reliance on the infinite mercy of God through the atoning blood of a Saviour. Here there is peace for the dying penitent, and here his peace is perfect. The exact suitability of the provision offered to us in the gospel, for the sinner's last and utmost need, affords us an ample evidence that it is the boon of heaven.

In order to apprehend this suitability, however, we must fix our regards in an especial manner on the dignity of the Mediator—on the glory and fulness of his deity. For the mighty purpose of deliverance from guilt and sin, the believer, who knows the depth of his

own corruption in the fall, can place no confidence in any mere man, or even in the most exalted and powerful of created beings. No sacrifice can supply his need, for the blotting out of sin, but one of infinite worth. No mediator will suffice for the repose of his troubled spirit, but such an one as is proposed to him in the gospel—a Mediator who was not only man *to die*, but God *to save*—omnipotent, to bear the burden of his iniquities, to deliver him from the power of Satan, and to quicken him from his moral death unto life eternal.

It is this grand distinguishing feature of the gospel, which above all others adapts it to the depth and extent of our ruin, and which, in the same degree, establishes the truth and divine origin of the Christian system.

IV. But peace in death is not the only blessing of which the sinner stands in need. He wants to be supplied with motives, which will inevitably lead him to a *life* of righteousness; for while an abundant provision is made in the gospel for the pardon of the penitent transgressor, it remains to be true that “without holiness no man can see the Lord.”

Now were justification proposed to him on such terms as would leave him without a due sense of the enormity of sin, this end would not be answered; because his feeling of the necessity of forsaking sin, would be slight in proportion to his estimate of the evil itself. Did we, for example, suppose that forgiveness



was offered to us as the mere reward of repentance, and of such poor repentance as human reason could effect, the low views of sin which such a notion would engender, would never afford a sufficient motive for a radical change of conduct. When we consider the deceitfulness of the heart of man, may we not rest assured, that the practical inference would be, "we will continue in sin, that grace may abound?"

But how different is the operation of that scheme of redemption, in which the free pardon of the penitent sinner is bestowed on the sole ground of the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour! The portentous fact of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and of his propitiatory death on the cross, cannot fail to produce, in the mind of the believer, a settled conviction of the danger and malignity of sin. And here again, the deity of Jesus is proved to be the spring and centre of the system. Could the death of a mere man like ourselves have atoned for the sins of the world, sin must needs be an evil of small importancé. Were the work to be effected by some angel or archangel, that evil might indeed assume a somewhat more imposing form, but could scarcely be regarded as desperate—the sure parent of everlasting woe. But behold the SON of GOD, who is one with the Father in infinite power and glory, descends from his throne of majesty, becomes a man, and bears upon HIMSELF, the penalty of our transgressions. How deadly, in the view of every

enlightened believer, must be that evil, for the remedy of which God has seen fit to provide by so astonishing a sacrifice!

The light which is thus reflected from the cross of Jesus on the danger and desert of sin, connected as it is with an express revelation of the purity of God, and of the future punishment of transgressors, has a powerful tendency to excite in the Christian, a dread of sinning, and an awful fear of that holy Being, to whom sin is infinitely offensive. Nor can we easily overrate the importance of this fear, as a restraining principle, as an unceasing motive to circumspection and self-denial. Truly may it be said, that "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."<sup>6</sup>

But a believing view of Christ crucified, is the most effective means not only of inspiring a dread of sin, but of adding poignancy and depth to the penitence of the sinner. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born."<sup>7</sup>

Every one must perceive that such an effect is of the highest importance for the purpose of reformation. The fear of God to which we are introduced by a knowledge of

<sup>6</sup> Prov. xiv, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Zech. xii, 10.

Christ crucified, is indeed no slavish principle; for with it there never fails to spring up another motive to obedience, of a still more delightful and influential character. That motive is love. God, in the scheme of redemption, lays a sovereign hold on our affections; and while he presents himself to us as a Being perfectly holy, and therefore perfectly lovely—by the free gift of his *only begotten Son*, he brings our love into action, commands our gratitude, and binds us by the dearest and strongest of ties to a life of piety and virtue.

This is the third point in relation to which the fitness of a divine Saviour to our need is admirably manifested. Precisely in proportion as we exalt the gift, we exalt also the demand on our gratitude. It is the infinite dignity of our Redeemer, and the corresponding preciousness of his atoning blood—it is the doctrine of “God manifest in the flesh”—which bears with a resistless force on the best feelings of the human heart, and by “the expulsive power of a new affection” delivers us from the love of this present world. The love of Christ is a constraining principle. It leads to decision, to devotedness, and to perseverance. It is a hidden spring in the machinery of man’s heart, of such a nature, as to maintain through every diversity of heights and depths, an even energy; and to occasion “a perpetual motion” in the service of God, and in the pursuit of his glory.

V. When we speak of the tendency of a particular doctrine to excite in our minds

right motives of action, we do not forget that the affections of the natural man are utterly corrupt and inapplicable, without grace, to any holy purpose. But God has provided us with an influence, under which they resume their right character and direction, and therefore become effective for the purest and most exalted ends.

The influence of the Holy Spirit, through which we are in the first instance converted to God, is afterwards "shed abundantly"<sup>8</sup> on the believer through faith in Christ crucified. It is perpetually at work in cleansing his thoughts and motives, in regulating his conduct, and in changing the whole current of his feelings and desires. In an especial manner the Spirit operates on the conscience — rectifying and refining the moral sense, exalting the standard of virtue, and guiding the watchful and obedient soul into all that is pure, lovely, just, and true. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."<sup>9</sup> "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."<sup>1</sup> "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."<sup>2</sup>

As the believer with a patient and willing mind, follows this heavenly guide, that new

<sup>8</sup> John vii, 38. Tit. iii, 6.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii, 27.

<sup>9</sup> John xvi, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii, 14.

creation gradually takes place in him, by which his once polluted soul is made meet for the purity of heaven, for the society of angels, and even for the presence of God himself. He puts off "concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," and puts on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."<sup>3</sup> Weak and unworthy as he is, he has renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now he "sows to the Spirit," and brings forth its "fruit," which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance."<sup>4</sup> "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."<sup>5</sup>

Such is the work of sanctification, the second main constituent of the scheme of redemption. That this work, made known to us as it is only by Christianity, is adapted to the spiritual need of the sinner, admits of no question. And equally obvious is it that the nice precision with which it suits its purpose, affords a practical demonstration that it is God's institution, and not man's invention.

Here it may be remarked that the Spirit of God bestowed on believers in Jesus, is the earnest of their inheritance, the pledge of their future happiness. Hence it is the means

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv, 22, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. v, 22, 23.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v, 17.

of exciting and strengthening in their minds another motive to action, of high importance to their spiritual progress. That motive is *hope*.

The hopes of the Christian are founded on the promises of God—and these, in the gospel, are two-fold—the promise of grace for the present life, and that of glory for the life to come. When, therefore, we have experienced the fulfilment of the first of these promises, our reliance on the second is confirmed and established. And what is the consequence? A “good hope through grace” animates our exertions, and cheers us onwards “in the race which is set before us.” The Christian, who has drunk at no stagnant well, but at the fountain of living water, is for ever aspiring after his final victory. “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth after those things which are before,” he presses “towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

VI. Yet the work of sanctification is very gradual. The believer is engaged in an arduous warfare; and the conflict between the carnal and spiritual mind, is often one of long duration, and subject to many vicissitudes. Although he has imbibed a hatred of sin, and is actuated by the fear and love of God and by the hope of glory, yet his natural corruption is far from being speedily annihilated. Sin, in its more hidden and insinuating forms, is often mixed up with his thoughts and imaginations, and even with his words and actions; and although he is no longer under

its dominion, he soon discovers that a complete victory over it can be obtained, only at the cost of many painful struggles. While he is exposed like other men to temporal afflictions, the plague of his own heart is to him a source of sorrow and distress, of which the unregenerate world knows nothing. Above all, Satan is his tempter and tormentor—a perpetual, and sometimes, alas! a successful enemy.

But what a blessed provision is made for him in the scheme of redemption! In the first place a free access is opened through the blood of Jesus, to a throne of infinite mercy. Hither it is his daily and hourly privilege to resort, that he may hold communion with God, and while he wrestles with the Holy One of Israel for a blessing, the Spirit helps his infirmities, adds grace to his supplications, and as it were prays in his stead, with “groanings which cannot be uttered.”<sup>6</sup>

And, in the second place, if he sins, he has “an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”—an High Priest at the right hand of the Majesty on high, who not only died to reconcile us to God, but ever lives to make intercession for us. This risen and glorified Mediator is, indeed, with wondrous exactness suited to our need. On the one hand he is touched as a brother with a feeling of our infirmities; on the other hand he rules supreme, for the help and deliverance of his servants, over all the powers of darkness.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. viii, 26.

He is at once our pitying friend, and our invincible captain.

As other parts of the scheme of redemption are calculated to bring into exercise the motives of fear, gratitude, and hope, so these consoling features of it, have a peculiarly powerful tendency to imbue us with a fourth principle of immense practical importance—I mean, *trust in God*. Those who are accustomed, under the influence of the Spirit, to draw near, through an interceding Mediator, to the Fountain of life, are attracted by an ever-present dispensation of mercy to stay themselves upon God. They are taught by delightful experience, to place a firm reliance on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; they live by faith in an unseen yet all-sufficient Saviour. And what is the practical consequence? While they lean on the arm of omnipotence, they gradually attain to that *stability* both of sentiment and practice, which the speculations of men, and the storms of life can never shake.

VII. Man in the fall is not only vicious, but miserable. He stands in need of happiness; and Christianity bestows upon him, even here, just so much of that heavenly boon, as suits his real condition.

The general tendency of Christianity to promote the happiness of mankind, is manifested by a comparison of the state of the ancient heathen world, with that of Christendom.

*The comforts of the hospital, the mitigations of the method of war, the place assigned in the*



scale of society to females, the sacred character of the marriage tie, and the numerous efforts made in Christian countries for the relief of the indigent, are so many proofs of the *general tendency* of Christianity to promote the happiness of mankind. These effects are produced even where our religion is by no means fully influential. Were its principles more deeply imbibed, and were they universal, the whole world would be a scene of peace, order, and love.

But to consider the subject as it regards individual experience. Let a man heartily embrace the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and give himself up to its regenerating influence; and not only will he become a centre of good and comfort to all around him, but there will be opened to himself resources of happiness, to which he was before an utter stranger. Now will he, as a reconciled and adopted child of God, delight in communion with his Creator, and derive, from daily obedience to the Saviour, a perpetual pleasure. A sacred charm will be cast over the enjoyments of life, and even its afflictions will be welcomed as tokens of a Father's love. Now will he be cheered, through every vicissitude, with the glad hope of immortality, and the "love of God, shed abroad" in his heart, will at times impart that flow of mental peace, which may well be regarded as a foretaste of heaven.

While however such happiness in the present life is the consequence of a hearty reception of the gospel, it is a circumstance which

her own—with which she unfolds to them the glories of their future state. The heaven revealed to us in the Scriptures is, in the first place, no spiritual non-entity, such as a vain philosophy has sometimes imagined—a mere condition of mind, independent of place or circumstance; but a sober reality—a better country—a region of infinite delights. And, secondly, on the other hand, it is not, like Mahomet's paradise, the inheritance of flesh and blood, or the scene of any carnal pleasure, but *there* all is spiritual, and all is pure.

The language of the sacred writers on the subject, although abounding in expressive and affecting images, is indeed distinguished from that of all false prophets, by an absence of details, and by a decent and solemn reserve. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."<sup>8</sup> Yet God has made known to us enough of these things to enlighten the understanding, and to satisfy the heart. In the Scriptures we are assured, that rest from labour and sorrow, a total cessation from sin, a perfect fellowship and harmony, the immediate presence of Christ, the ever-flowing influences of the Spirit, the service and praise of God—will constitute the joy of saints—the eternal pleasures of heaven.

Above all, it is the noble distinction of the scheme of redemption, that under its gracious provisions, happiness goes hand-in hand with

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. ii, 9. Comp. Isa. lxiv, 4.

holiness—that the latter is absolutely indispensable to the former—and that they will know no separation through all eternity.

It appears then

*First*—That the primary purpose of Christianity, as of every other divine dispensation, is the glory of God—a purpose fully answered by that peculiar display of his attributes which distinguishes the scheme of redemption, and also by the good effects which that scheme produces on his creatures.

*Secondly*—That in subservience to the glory of God, the purposes of this dispensation may probably be vast and numerous, far beyond our conception; that Scripture describes it as an object of contemplation to beings superior to man, and mentions its consequences as co-extensive with the universe.

*Thirdly*—That the scheme of redemption is adapted with wonderful precision to the spiritual need of *mankind*; as appears from the following considerations:

Through this plan of mercy, man, in his darkness, is illuminated; yet only in such a manner and degree, as are suited to his condition.

Incapable by nature of apprehending the things of God, and dead to holiness, he is born again of the Spirit.

Guilty and condemned by the law, he is freely forgiven and justified; yet only on a principle which impresses him with a dread of sin, and an awful fear of God; and while this fear inculcates circumspection, the love which

the same plan engenders, constrains obedience, zeal, and perseverance.

Sinful and weak in himself, he is guided, assisted, and sanctified by the influence of the Spirit of God ; yet so that the experience of grace, confirming the hope of glory, animates his own efforts in the race of virtue.

Engaged in an arduous warfare against sin and Satan, he reposes on the mediation of a glorified Saviour, and thus imbibes that trust in God, which insures his stability in the truth.

In his natural misery, he is supplied even here with the boon of happiness ; yet only so far as it is safe for him to be happy.

In the midst of death, he rejoices in the prospect of *complete* immortality.

And finally, instead of his merited reward of endless woe, a heaven is set before him, at once substantial and spiritual ; at once infinitely joyous and perfectly pure.

It is well observed, in Ecclesiasticus, that "all things are double one against another," and that God "hath made nothing imperfect."<sup>9</sup> The force of this remark must be obvious to every one who looks abroad into the field of nature. The eye is made for the light, and the light for the eye ; the soil of the earth for its vegetable productions, and vegetables for the soil on which they grow ; the fish for the waters, and the waters for the fish. All nature is filled with pairs of things, which have no tendency to produce each other, yet are fitted

<sup>9</sup> Eccles. xlii, 24.

together with a perfect exactness. Who ever dreams that the lungs of a man produce the air he breathes, or the air the lungs which breathe it? Yet the structure of the lungs is exactly such as enables us to inhale a gaseous fluid; and the air is just of the consistency which suits it to this structure. What anatomist is not aware, that the blood is so conducted through the lungs, as there to imbibe from the atmosphere its vivifying principle? What chemist does not know that the atmosphere is precisely so composed, as to serve this purpose; that if either oxygen or azote was omitted, life would be destroyed—that even if they were mingled in different proportions, both air and lungs would immediately become useless?

Now in the moral and spiritual world, correspondences of a similar kind are easily perceptible. The light is not more suited to the eye, or the soil of the earth to the vegetable, or the water to the frame work of the fish, or the air to the lungs which inhale it, than is each particular of the scheme of redemption to that part of our mental system, with which it corresponds. And considered as a whole, revealed religion answers its end in supplying our spiritual wants, just as completely as nature serves her purpose, in providing for our present life, and in satisfying the demands of the body.

No fair reasoner, therefore, who is accustomed to trace the contrivances of this visible world to an all-wise Contriver, can refuse to

allow that Christianity, like nature, is the work and ordinance of Him who pairs, adapts, and balances all things according to their need. If the production of material things, which "perish with the using," displays (as it unquestionably does) the wisdom and power of God—how much more that *new* creation, which acts on the hidden springs of man's heart, opens the blind understanding, imparts the spiritual life, applies every motive to its proper function, redeems and purifies the guilty soul, and converts the very child of hell, into an heir of glory!<sup>1</sup>

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The general argument which has now been stated, is confirmed and elucidated by some particular reflections.

In the *first* place, the great system of truth unfolded to us in the Bible, although admirably compacted, is in its nature complex. It is composed of many parts, and these are distinguished, one from another, by different, and sometimes even by opposite characteristics. On the one hand are revealed to us the terrors of the Lord—on the other hand, his spontaneous mercies; on the one hand, election and sovereign grace—on the other, the unfettered and responsible agency of man. Above all, while the doctrine of justification declares the pardoning love of God towards a

<sup>1</sup> Vid. Grotii Com. in Eph. iii, 9. "Omnia Christus nova; et *divinior* hæc creatio quam prior illa."

guilty world, that of sanctification proclaims with a voice equally strong and clear, the indispensable necessity of personal holiness.

But while these various parts of the system are distinct from each other, and may never be confounded, and while the mode in which they consist is in some instances concealed from our view, they are inseparably joined; and being arranged with a perfect precision, they unite in producing a single effect. That effect is the moral renovation of fallen man.

Now as the wisdom and power of God are often displayed in the multiplicity of ends which a single means answers, so they are no less illustriously manifested by the combined application of diversified means, and even of opposite principles, to the production of one broad, simple, and glorious, result. This is one of the characteristics by which the counsels of the Supreme Being are pre-eminently distinguished—by which “he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.”<sup>2</sup> Nor is it beside our mark to observe, that when Christianity fails to produce its full and genial effect in sincere believers, this circumstance mostly arises from their taking too limited a view of a system, of which the very nature is, to comprehend in one vast machinery whatsoever can affect the heart of man, and form the character of the servant of God.

This remark naturally leads us to our *second* point—namely, that Christianity is neither

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xliv, 25.

deficient nor redundant; it equally rejects augmentation and diminution. The history of the professing church of Christ, now continued through more than eighteen centuries, affords many humbling proofs, that the moment we add anything to the religion of the New Testament, or take anything away from it, that moment we injure its structure and weaken its effect. The doctrines of revealed religion came forth from the hands of their Author and his immediate followers, in a state of perfection, and the concentrated wisdom of ten thousand philosophers and theologians can change them, only for the worse.

The man who has a just apprehension of his own spiritual need, and of the fulness which is in Christ, will readily acknowledge that the scheme of the gospel is exactly suited to its purpose. But he will go further. He will confess that in whatsoever flights he may indulge his imagination, to whatsoever extent he may employ his speculative powers—it is utterly impossible for him to conceive any other scheme, or a scheme in any respect different, which would be equally well adapted to the salvation of sinners. Well might the apostle Paul exclaim, “Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed!”<sup>3</sup>

As it is impossible for us to devise any new plan for the salvation of sinners, which would bear the least comparison with that of the

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i, 8.



gospel, so, in the *third* place, the scheme of redemption revealed to us in Scripture, is itself distinguished by many peculiar features which no man, in his own wisdom, could either have invented or imagined. The infinite mercy of God, the fall and corruption of man, the influence of the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual glories of a future state, are all of them points which lie deeply hidden from the natural man, and to which there is no probability that his thoughts would ever have been directed. But our observation applies with still greater force to the incarnation and sacrifice of the Only-begotten Son of God—a doctrine not only original and absolutely singular, but far beyond the boundaries of man's conception. Yet this is the turning point of the whole system, on which its restoring and saving efficacy mainly depends. Under the love of God the Father, it is the moving cause of our salvation—the very spring of our hopes, our reformation, and our happiness.

*Fourthly*, although extrinsic causes have hitherto prevented the universal diffusion of Christianity, our religion itself has no exclusive tendencies; “in its scope, purpose, and practical operation, it is entirely and equally adapted to the whole human race.”<sup>4</sup>

All men are guilty—all condemned by the law—all diseased with sin—all under the yoke of Satan. To all alike therefore is that religion suited, which provides for our pardon, our deliverance, and our cure. But another

<sup>4</sup> *Essays on Christianity*, No. iv.

reason of the universal applicability of the scheme of redemption, is the simplicity of the terms on which it is offered to our acceptance—"BELIEVE and LIVE." God gave his only begotten Son that "whosoever believeth in him might have everlasting life."<sup>5</sup> "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."<sup>6</sup> "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."<sup>7</sup>

That it is the duty of every man, as far as lies in his power, to examine the evidences of Christianity, and to mark and number the pillars which support the fabric of our faith, and that such a practice is of eminent use, both for the conviction of unbelievers and for the confirmation of Christians, is a truth which cannot be questioned. Nevertheless a practical belief of the gospel is usually found to rest on a far more simple ground. The Saviour is proposed to the sinner, and the sinner, when made sensible of his actual condition, will no more reject the Saviour, than a drowning man will refuse to lay hold on the arm which would draw him to the shore, and which is his only means of safety.

He who has just views of the holiness of God and of his own sinfulness, and feels the depth of his need by nature, will imbibe the gospel as simply and eagerly as the newborn babe its natural food; and just in proportion as his heart and conduct are influenced, will his understanding be opened to perceive the perfect fitness, and therefore the

<sup>5</sup> John iii, 16.

<sup>6</sup> John iii, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Acts xvi, 31.

unquestionable truth, of the scheme of redemption.

When we reflect on the sublimity of the principal doctrines of the Bible, we might be tempted to suppose that none but the most intellectual of men would be capable of embracing them. But Christianity, in its application to the understanding as well as to the heart, is evenly adapted to all men; embracing in its comprehensive grasp of charity, the most simple and the most cultivated of our species. While, as it regards their mode and nature, her mysteries are far beyond the comprehension of any man—in their practical bearing, in their suitability to our need, in their saving efficacy, they are just as intelligible to the Indian convert, or to the illiterate peasant, as they are to the most profound and enlightened of philosophers.

Now I conceive that nothing can more clearly evince the wisdom as well as goodness of its Author, than this distinguishing provision. Were a vast and complex machine to be formed for some important temporal purpose universally interesting to men, although it might be put together on scientific principles, and display a matchless variety and combination of forces, foul would be the blot on the wisdom of its contriver, should much of art or science be required in applying it to its use. But when such a machine may be brought to bear upon its purpose, with undeviating success, by means of a simple handle which a child may turn, then indeed are

we fully satisfied that its maker understood his calling—then have we a perfect specimen of human ingenuity.

To conclude—one of two alternatives is inevitable. Either the religion of the Bible comes from God, and is therefore unquestionably and perfectly true; or else this glorious system, so diversified in its parts, yet so simple in its operation, susceptible of no improvement even from the wisest of men, distinguished by features far beyond the reach of human conception, and yet fitted to the humblest as well as to the highest capacities, universally and perfectly adapted to the spiritual need of all men—*is a forgery*.

A forgery invented by whom? Not by persons of profound reasoning powers, belonging to some highly cultivated society, and skilled in all philosophy and learning; but of a few obscure, illiterate, Jewish fishermen!

Now it is surely no exaggeration to assert, that he who believes this latter alternative, has adopted the most preposterous of superstitions. Notwithstanding his pride of intellect and all his boasted show of reason, the infidel must take his place among the most credulous and irrational of mankind.

## CONCLUSION.

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To convince the cold, deliberate unbeliever, who has made up his mind to prefer a fathomless chaos to the beauty and order of revealed religion, I can scarcely venture to hope. In pity for the soul of such a man, I would pray God to put forth that pre-eminent work of grace, by which alone can be reclaimed the reckless speculator who tramples on the Son of God, despises the blood of his covenant, and contemns and derides the work of the Holy Spirit.

That many persons are to be met with in the present day who have been betrayed by a *little* knowledge<sup>8</sup> into this depth of error, is a melancholy fact. May they be brought to repentance before that awful period arrives when they shall hear a voice saying—The day of your salvation is past for ever—“He which is filthy, let him be filthy still!”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> “It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind of man to atheism, but a *farther proceeding* therein doth bring the mind back again to religion.”—*Lord Bacon's Advancement of Learning*, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. xxii, 11.

But there is a much more numerous class of persons, who are not altogether insensible of the excellence of Christianity, but are, nevertheless, prone to unbelief; and while they resist the invitations of divine mercy, shelter themselves under the pretext that *no man is responsible for his creed*. To such I would address myself, and beseech them to reflect, that while they are hesitating on the verge of Christianity, and weighing with nice scruples whether they will accept it or not, time is rapidly carrying them onwards to the judgment seat of their Creator. Except they turn to the Lord during their short remaining period of probation, they will there discover, when it shall be all too late, that this unreasonable pretext will fail to afford them a moment's protection from the fatal consequences of *sin*.

Their case is not to be confounded with that of the uninstructed heathen, who have never heard the truth. To these, the gospel has been preached; it is written in the book of God for their instruction; and if they reject it, they do so at their peril.

On this subject, the Scriptures themselves supply us with a clear illustration. The Israelites, for their murmuring against God, are punished with fiery serpents, under the influence of whose poisonous bite they lie dying in the wilderness. Moses, by the command of his Almighty leader, lifts up a brazen serpent on a pole, and proclaims the promise of Jehovah "that every one that is bitten,

when he looketh upon it, shall live.”<sup>1</sup> To look upon the serpent in reliance on the promise of God, and in obedience to his command, is an act of faith; and as many of the people as perform this act are healed of their wounds.

But we can easily suppose the case of an unbelieving Israelite, who should aver that his wound was by no means mortal; and even supposing it to be so, that it could not, in the nature of things, be affected by his looking on a serpent of brass—that such a mode of healing was unintelligible, and therefore incredible. The result is obvious. He turns his head away from an object which is a mere offence to him; the poison performs its office without interruption, and in a few short moments he is numbered with the dead.

Now we are all wounded by the devil—the serpent who deceived our first parents, and the natural, necessary, consequence of sin—the poison which he has injected—is the death of the soul. God beholds us in our desperate condition, and in his infinite compassion provides us with a remedy. The Son of man is lifted up on the cross, and the proclamation goes forth on divine authority to a world of sinners—*Believe and live*. The Christian obeys, and is healed; but what says the unbeliever? “Your gospel to me is foolishness; for in the first place, I am not, as you uncharitably pretend, a *sinner*; and secondly, if I were so, what possible connexion can there

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxi, 4—9 Comp. John iii, 14, 15.

be, between the crucifixion of Jesus, and the forgiveness of *my* transgressions? Such a system does not accord with my notions, either of wisdom or rectitude, and I cannot be responsible for not believing a doctrine which it is impossible for me to understand." Thus, in the pride and folly of his heart, he rejects the appointed remedy—the only possible means of his recovery. And what is the consequence? Sin and Satan work their own way without impediment. He dies, and dies for ever.

To walk by faith and not by sight, is in various respects, the lot of humanity—a provision wrought into the whole constitution and order of Providence—the rule by which we act, in a countless multitude of the occasions and exigencies of life. Since then we know it to be an appointment of every day's experience, it is absurd to object to it in matters of religion. In spite of all our cavils, that great principle of godliness remains unaltered and unalterable — "The just shall live by FAITH."

But not only has God graciously proposed his truth to us. He has accompanied the revelation of it with indubitable vouchers of its divine origin. What sceptic will dare to pretend, that he is not *morally* responsible for an examination of these vouchers? Christianity is fraught with tidings of such unutterable importance, and is distinguished, even at first sight, by such broad marks of truth, that a doubter is bound by the most obvious moral



principles, to investigate the grounds on which it claims our credence.

Bishop Butler has justly remarked, that "the same character, the same inward principle which, after a man is convinced of the truth of religion, renders him obedient to the precepts of it, would, were he not thus convinced, set him about an examination of it;" and that "inattention, negligence, want of all serious concern about a matter of such a nature, and such importance, when offered to men's consideration is, before a distinct conviction of its truth, *as real immoral depravity and dissoluteness, as neglect of religious practice after such conviction.*"<sup>2</sup> Disobedience to the law in the one case, and neglect of evidence in the other, equally constitute punishable guilt.

But we are morally responsible, not only for examining the evidences of Christianity, but also for conducting our inquiry in a right spirit—with calmness and impartiality, with zeal and industry, and above all, with deep dependence on God and earnest prayer. The pride of our hearts must be abased, and truth, however humbling, must be permitted to exercise its genuine influence over our minds. If our prejudice or vanity obstructs its progress, we are condemned as transgressors and must abide by the consequence.

But a man may plead inability to pursue an enlarged inquiry into this all-important subject. Then let him confine his attention

<sup>2</sup> See Butler's Analogy, Part II. Chap. VI.

to the Scriptures themselves; for the internal marks of their divine origin cannot be mistaken; they are numerous, palpable, overpowering. Let him give himself up to the *practical* efficacy of the principles unfolded in Scripture; and the comparison of his own experience with the contents of that sacred volume, will soon furnish him with irresistible evidence that it is the book of God.

A class of persons is indeed sometimes to be met with, who are at once desirous to believe the truths of Christianity, and prone to doubt them. While such persons are objects of sincere sympathy, they ought nevertheless to be clearly informed, that to continue in such a condition of mind, is extremely dangerous; and if a cure for it be at hand, and yet be neglected, they are morally guilty in the sight of God. Now such a cure may unquestionably be found in the patient, daily, investigation of Scripture, with supplication and prayer. Christ unfolds himself to us in the Scriptures; and at the same time, he knocks at the door of our hearts by his Spirit. If we open the door and receive the heavenly guest, he will soon display his beauty and glory to our mental vision. We shall behold him in his divine majesty, in his boundless power, in his matchless condescension, in his perfect fitness to all our need, and we shall no longer be able to doubt, that he is God, our SAVIOUR.

It is never to be forgotten, that the guilt of *unbelief* is infinitely heightened, by the worth

gospel, so, in the *third* place, the scheme of redemption revealed to us in Scripture, is itself distinguished by many peculiar features which no man, in his own wisdom, could either have invented or imagined. The infinite mercy of God, the fall and corruption of man, the influence of the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual glories of a future state, are all of them points which lie deeply hidden from the natural man, and to which there is no probability that his thoughts would ever have been directed. But our observation applies with still greater force to the incarnation and sacrifice of the Only-begotten Son of God—a doctrine not only original and absolutely singular, but far beyond the boundaries of man's conception. Yet this is the turning point of the whole system, on which its restoring and saving efficacy mainly depends. Under the love of God the Father, it is the moving cause of our salvation—the very spring of our hopes, our reformation, and our happiness.

*Fourthly*, although extrinsic causes have hitherto prevented the universal diffusion of Christianity, our religion itself has no exclusive tendencies; “in its scope, purpose, and practical operation, it is entirely and equally adapted to the whole human race.”<sup>4</sup>

All men are guilty—all condemned by the law—all diseased with sin—all under the yoke of Satan. To all alike therefore is that religion suited, which provides for our pardon, our deliverance, and our cure. But another

<sup>4</sup> Essays on Christianity, No. iv.

when, to complete our argument, we display the holiness and fitness of the whole scheme of revealed religion,—we make our appeal to the *reason* of those to whom we address ourselves ; and our only request is, that in humble dependence on the Supreme Author of reason, they will bring this noble faculty into *full* and *diligent* exercise. We are quite sure that if they examine the subject with sufficient care and comprehensiveness, they cannot fail to be convinced by evidences, which may be made clear even to the uninstructed mind ; but which, nevertheless, have satisfied the profound understandings of Bacon, Locke, Boyle, and Newton.

And secondly, when we open the volume of Scripture, and propose that interpretation of its contents—especially of its more mysterious parts—which is demanded by the plain laws of criticism—laws which good sense has established, and which are familiar to every scholar—we again appeal to enlightened reason ; and we beseech our readers or hearers to exercise it with a perfect impartiality and with deep deliberation—still, however, in reverent dependence on Him, who gave the Scriptures forth.

But having gone thus far, we are brought to the line which reason may not pass, and it becomes our *reasonable* duty, to accept the doctrines of revelation with the *faith of the*

throughout many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age."—*Bacon, Adv. of Learn.*  
p. 88.

*little child.* Our reasoning powers must here take their rest, for they cannot compass the deep things of God, and “inspired theology,” as Lord Bacon admirably observes, is the “haven and sabbath of all man’s contemplations.”<sup>5</sup>

Could it indeed be shewn that any of the doctrines of Christianity are contrary to reason—in other words could they be *disproved*—we should then be compelled, not only to confess them false, but to renounce the religion to which they belong. But the fact that they are *above* reason, is so far from affording the least objection to these doctrines, that it tends only to confirm their truth; for since they form part of the counsels, or relate to the nature, of an infinite and incomprehensible Being, this fact is exactly such, as any man of plain sense would have anticipated.<sup>6</sup> Who does not know that there are ten thousand secrets in the book of nature, which reason cannot fathom? And who ought to feel the least degree of surprise or disquietude, in finding that there are some such secrets also, in the economy of grace? “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge

<sup>5</sup> Adv. of Learn. p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> The prerogative of God extendeth as well to the reason, as to the will of man; so that as we are to obey his law, though we find a reluctance in our will; so we are to believe his word, though we find a reluctance in our reason. For if we believe only that which is agreeable to our sense, we give consent to the matter and not to the author, which is no more than we would do towards a suspected and discredited witness. *Id.* p. 221.

of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"<sup>7</sup>

But mark the progress of unbelief. The man who fails to perceive the distinction between the province of reason and that of faith, and between things *contrary* to reason, and things *above* it, speculates on the mysterious doctrines of Christianity, and refuses to believe what he cannot comprehend. And what is his next downward step? Since doctrines, plain in their practical application, but in other respects *far beyond the reach of man's comprehension*, are clearly declared in Scripture, and are interwoven with the whole texture of the book, the sceptic who refuses to accept them, finds his belief in the inspiration, and even in the authenticity, of the sacred volume gradually undermined; and in spite of abundant and conclusive evidence to the contrary—that is to say, in direct opposition to the dictates of reason—he at length persuades himself that the Bible is a forgery, and Christianity a fable.

The doubter is now thrown back on natural religion, and openly assumes the name of *deist*; but his deism is soon discovered to be only a name; for since our most important knowledge of the Supreme Being is derived from the Bible—since the natural arguments, even for the existence of God, shine in our understandings, chiefly by the light reflected on them from the Scriptures—the man who rejects his Bible, very easily falls into a fur-

<sup>7</sup> Rom. xi, 33.

ther depth of infidelity, and before very long, rejects his Creator. Now "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" and therefore no moral obligation, no restraint on licentiousness, no fixed principle of action! How tremendous is the consequence!—rebellion against God and man, wickedness of every description, midnight darkness instead of noonday light, and finally the dismal horrors of eternal death.

If the evidences of Christianity be not considered valid, those of any other religion adopted amongst men, must certainly be regarded as unworthy even of notice. Let the young reader therefore call to mind, that the alternative does not lie between Christianity and any other system of theology, but between Christianity and *nothing*; or rather between Christianity and inextricable wretchedness, misery, and confusion. Under a just sense of so terrible an alternative, let him humble himself in the sight of God, and pray to be preserved even from the smallest and earliest suggestions of "the evil heart of unbelief."

But there is a shorter road to infidelity than that which we have now described—that is, *sin*. A man may indulge in extreme licentiousness, and practise a thousand horrible barbarities, and yet be a faithful disciple of Mahomet. In order to be a consistent follower of Budha or Bramah, he *must* break the law of God, in a fearful and murderous manner. But no man can lead a life of sin, and be a disciple of Christ, or even long con-



tinue to believe in Christianity. For in the first place, the habitual transgressor of the law, naturally pacifies his conscience by persuading himself that there is no law; and he *loves* "darkness rather than light," because his deeds are "evil."<sup>8</sup> And secondly, by a judicial decree of Providence, it is the perpetual tendency of sin to harden the heart of man, and to stop his ear and close his eye in unbelief. Again, infidelity reacts upon our sinful propensities, and never fails to impart to them a double vivacity and firmness.

On the contrary, Christianity and virtue are inseparable allies, and helpers of each other. As the religion of Christ leads directly to a life of righteousness, so a life of righteousness is ever found to brighten and enlarge our views of divine truth, and to confirm our faith in the Saviour of mankind. They who are obedient to the light which they already enjoy, shall be made partakers of more light. They who "*do the will*" of the Father, shall not only *believe* in the doctrine of the Son; they shall *know* from their own experience that it is indeed "*of God.*"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> John iii, 19.

<sup>9</sup> John vii. 17. Thus are we brought back at last to that first principle from which our whole argument has sprung—a principle of irresistible force and certainty in matters pertaining to religion—that "*what is good, is true.*" "In general and in sum," says Lord Bacon, "*certain it is that veritas and bonitas differ but as the seal and the print; for truth prints goodness; and they be the clouds of error which descend in the storms of passions and perturbations.*"—*Adv. of Learn.* p. 62.



I cannot satisfactorily conclude these remarks without addressing a few sentences first, to merely nominal Christians, and secondly, to the more serious and devotional professors of our holy religion.

I. It is an affecting proof of the corruption of the human heart, and of the power of him who is described as the "father of lies," that so large a proportion of persons who profess Christianity are, nevertheless, living *as if it were false*. They are conformed to the spirit of the world, and not only is the greater part of their time consumed in the pursuit of wealth, or in frivolous amusements, but their hearts are so filled with these objects, that the love of God has *no place* in them. Or if God and the things of his kingdom *occasionally* occupy their thoughts and feelings, the world is their principal delight; they are "double-minded,"—divided between two—and, therefore, with respect to religion, "unstable in all their ways."<sup>1</sup>

Such a condition is one of *practical* infidelity; for although the worldling, if he thinks at all of religion, probably thinks of it as true, yet he is destitute of that vital "faith which worketh by love;" and in consequence, he is perpetually found to belie his own profession. He conducts himself as if eternity were a passing hour, and as if the present day were to last for ever.

In appealing to this numerous class of persons, I would beseech them, "by the mercies

<sup>1</sup> James i, 8.

of God," to pause in their career of carelessness, and to reflect on the unutterable *importance* of the religion which they profess. If Christianity is true, (and true we know it to be), it is *every thing*. So vast are its doctrines, so high its standard of action, so overwhelming the dangers, so glorious the hopes, which it unfolds, that nothing can satisfy its just demands, short of a full devotion of our faculties to the work of our soul's salvation. By the most sacred of obligations, we are bound to fix our primary affections on God our Father, whose love is the fountain of all our happiness; and since we are not "our own," but "bought with a price," it is our unquestionable duty, no longer to live unto ourselves, but "unto him who died for us and rose again."<sup>2</sup>

True indeed it is, that to take up our daily cross and follow Christ, is difficult and painful to the natural man; for it costs us an unconditional surrender of our secret faults, and of many of our favourite habits of thinking and acting. But Jesus has commanded us to pluck out the offending right eye, or to cut off the offending right hand, and to cast it from us; because it is "profitable" for us, that "one" of our "members should perish," and not that our "whole body should be cast into hell."<sup>3</sup> And let it be remembered, that the grace of Christ is sufficient for us—that if we freely open our hearts to him, he will so change our feelings by the influence

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v, 15,

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v, 29, 30.

of his Spirit, that we shall account his yoke easy, his burthen light, and his cross our highest happiness.

And what will be the practical result? First, an abstinence from all things unlawful; secondly, such a pursuit of things lawful as is completely subordinate to the higher purposes of our being; and thirdly, the cordial devotion of all the talents bestowed on us to the service and glory of God.

The necessity of a *decided mind* in religion is awfully manifested by the fact, that in the descriptions given by our Lord and his apostles of the day of judgment, no middle state is recognized. All men will then find their place either on the right hand or on the left hand of their Judge, and will finally discover that they are the heirs either of the blessing or of the curse. Is there not abundant reason to fear, that except he *now* repent, the man who weakly divides his affections between God and the world, and rests contented with only a *little* religion, will then be numbered among the "unprofitable" servants?

Independently, however, of this appalling consideration, the signs of the present times peculiarly demand *decision* in matters of religion. The powers of light and darkness are, in a very conspicuous manner, arrayed against each other. Infidelity and iniquity are lifting up their heads on high, and gathering their forces together; and, on the other hand, scriptural religion is gradually diffusing itself among men. If we continue in that divided

mind which is ever marked by weakness and *instability*, we now appear to be in greater danger than ever, of being carried away captive by the influence of the wicked. But if we give up *all* for Christ, and win the Saviour for ourselves, nothing will eventually harm us. Our cause is righteous, and though our numbers may not be large, our Captain is unconquerable. May both the writer and the reader of these pages be found, in every day of darkness and dispute, clearly ranged on the side of Christ—under the peaceful yet all-prevailing banner of the Holy One of Israel !

II. To the more serious and decided professors of Christianity I address myself under feelings of peculiar diffidence; but I trust I may be permitted briefly to allude to some of the dangers with which the church of Christ appears to be surrounded.

Were I asked what I deem to be the most common temptation to which, in the present day peculiarly, Christians are exposed, I should be inclined to reply—the substitution of *strong opinion* for that *deeply felt religious principle*, by which alone the mind can be preserved in tenderness, humility, and love to God and man. The importance of sound and orthodox views of Christianity cannot indeed be too highly estimated; because it is our bounden duty to believe the truths which our Heavenly Father condescends to reveal to us; and because it is chiefly through the medium of these views, that the heart of the believer is rightly affected towards God.

Nevertheless experience amply proves that the theory of religion may be embraced, and may even assume in the mind a very definite shape—with an outline perhaps somewhat more marked and rigid than Scripture warrants—while all that is practical and lovely in the character of the Christian continues at a low ebb. It is the frequent device of Satan to transplant the religion of the believer from the *heart* to the *head*; and this device is one with which our corrupt nature is ever prone to co-operate. For it is infinitely more easy to think and talk correctly on religious subjects, than to cultivate a deep sense of our own vileness, to submit to the heart-searching operation of the Holy Spirit, and to walk in the narrow path of self-denial.

Hence it sometimes happens that a high religious profession is blemished by a conformity to the world—by self-indulgence—by “covetousness which is idolatry”—and above all by a hot and unsubdued temper. Even when engaged in defending the great doctrines of the Gospel, Christians are sometimes tempted to lay aside that meek and quiet spirit which becomes their profession, and in the place of earnest, faithful, appeals to those whose faith in Christ is defective, to make use of offensive names and contemptuous accusations.

That all these infractions of the spirit of Christianity are extremely unfavourable to its progress in the world, is a point which admits of no question; for there is probably nothing



which has a stronger tendency to encourage the prevalence of infidelity, than the various inconsistencies of believers. Far indeed am I from insinuating that the generality of serious Christians do not bring forth much—very much—of the fruit of righteousness—enough to afford an evidence that their religion is of divine origin. But might we not add strength and clearness to this evidence by aiming at a higher standard in our conduct and conversation? Ought not our light to shine with a greater degree of purity and brightness? Ought we not to “*adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in *all things*?” Ought we not to “*be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*?”

That opinionative mind, however, which sometimes usurps the place of principle, with respect to the essentials of Christianity, is chiefly prone to fix itself on points which are non-essential and doubtful. Many such points are treated of in the present day, as if they were just as certain, and almost as vital, as the truth that God exists, and as the cardinal, saving, doctrines of the gospel.

In making this remark I do not so much refer to matters connected with modes of worship and church government, as to questions on which, independently of all sectarian classification, *individuals* are found to entertain very different sentiments. Such questions, for example, are the nature and character of

the Millennium—its near or distant approach—the continuance of miraculous gifts in the church—the outward and personal reign of the Messiah—and the probable period of his coming.

Whatsoever we may think on these and similar subjects, we ought surely to exercise a holy watchfulness that we may never exaggerate their importance, or suffer our minds to be filled with them, to the exclusion of indispensable truth as well as of practical godliness. If we would experience preservation from such a danger, we must dwell in humility before God, and seek the rectifying influence of the Holy Spirit, who, while He teaches us to value every part of divine truth, will never fail to unfold it to our understandings, and impress it on our hearts, in its *just* and unalterable *proportions*.

When those questions in religion which are *not* essential, assume in our minds an undue magnitude and certainty—whether they be the distinctions of sects, or only of individuals—the frequent consequence is a harsh judgment of our brethren, and a breach of that love and charity which ought always to bind together the members of the militant church. Never, perhaps, was there a period, when the exhortation of Paul was more seasonable than in the present day. “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all *lowliness* and *meekness*, with *long suffering*, *forbearing* one

another in *love*, endeavouring to keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of *peace*.”<sup>4</sup>

Let us remember that Christ is even now our almighty and ever present King; who rules over his children by his Spirit; and that as we obey its dictates we shall learn to imitate the example of Jesus himself. Now *charity*, *brotherly love*, and *humility*, are the virtues, in reference to which, above all others, this perfect pattern is proposed to us in Scripture. “This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you.”<sup>5</sup> “If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”<sup>6</sup> “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be *like minded one toward another* according to (or after the example of) Christ Jesus.”<sup>7</sup> “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves; *let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*,” &c.<sup>8</sup>

The principles which are common to all sound and devotional Christians, are of infinite strength and efficacy—amply sufficient to unite in holy fellowship, multitudes who entertain very different opinions on subordinate questions in religion. In this union, under

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv, 1—3.

<sup>5</sup> John xv, 12.

<sup>6</sup> John xiii, 14, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. xv, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Phil. ii, 2—5. Comp. 1 Pet. ii, 20, 21.



the providence and grace of God, lies the strength of our cause. May it never be severed! And may the happy period be hastened when pure and primitive Christianity shall abound in the world, and reign triumphant in the hearts of all men!

THE END.

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